

# **Horizon**

**A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART**

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*by* ANNA KAVAN

**MOLIÈRE**

*by* MARTIN TURNELL

**FROZEN MUSIC**

*by* MATILA GHYKA

**A VISIT TO MR. SICKERT AT BROADSTAIRS**

*by* BASIL JONZEN

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# HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

Vol. VIII No. 45 September 1943

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**1843**



**1943**

To celebrate their Centenary, which falls this year, Macmillan & Co. are offering a series of awards, open to men and women serving in the British and American Forces, for literary material, ready for publication or not yet completed owing to the war. These awards consist of sums of £2,000 or \$10,000 and are to be divided between works of fiction and non-fiction. They are outright payments, and are in addition to the usual royalty payments to authors.

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# COMMENT

In spite, however, of their promising leanings the men of the New Signatures school support the war as solidly as the old guard, as can be seen from the magazine *HORIZON*, which represents the respectable liberalism into which their movement has sunk after three years of war.

GEORGE WOODCOCK, in *View* (New York)

LIBERALISM is the air which most writers breathe, even those who have never heard of it. It is the fruit of liberty and the flowering of security; its tolerance, its humanity, its dignity and its hopefulness are the hard won lesson, the only lesson that can be learnt from the intolerance, the inhumanity, the indignity and the despair of tyranny and war. It is a philosophy, a state of mind, a jumping-off place. Montaigne was confirmed in it by the wars of religion, Voltaire by the Bourbon despotism. It is the calm broad reach which awaits those who have navigated the rapids of passion. Mr. Woodcock is an anarchist: that is to say a revolutionary liberal, and yet the anarchists are against the war. But what kind of life would the Spanish anarchists have had under Hitler? Would Durruti and Ascaso have lain down under him? or would he have treated them any differently than Franco? It is a pity that the English anarchists, who might become a political party, should still hold to the fallacy that this is an imperialist war. Putting the class war first, as the anarchists do, is a result of living on an island which has not been occupied, and perhaps to some extent the result of a failure on our part to put across the true horror of conditions in Europe in such a way that it grips the individualist. Out of decency, out of laziness, and out of fear we are immune to atrocities.

*HORIZON* has not done enough lately to bring the war home to its readers, partly because its true mission is to maintain cultural values for those who are fighting the war, and partly because it is so hard put to find good war material. War reporting below a certain standard merely saturates. Next month *HORIZON* returns to the war with accounts by Arthur Koestler and J. Kessel of some aspects of the German occupation which we are too prone to ignore.

A few copies of Aragon's *Les Yeux d'Elsa* are now available at *HORIZON*, postage free, six shillings and sixpence.

W. R. RODGERS

## CHRIST WALKING ON THE WATER

Slowly, O so slowly, longing rose up  
In the forenoon of his face, till only  
A ringlet of fog lingered round his loins;  
And fast he went down beaches all weeping  
With weed, and waded out. Twelve tall waves  
Sequent and equated, hollowed and followed.  
O what a cock-eyed sea he walked on,  
What poke-ends of foam, what elbowings  
And lugubrious looks, what ebullient  
And contumacious musics. Always there were  
Hills and holes, pills and poles, a wavy wall  
And bucking ribbon caterpillaring past  
With glossy ease. And often, as he walked,  
The slow curtains of swell swung open and showed,  
Miles and smiles away, the bottle-boat  
Flung on one wavering frond of froth that fell  
Knee-deep and heaved thigh-high. In his forward face  
No cave of afterthought opened; to his ear  
No bottom clamour climbed up; nothing blinked.  
For he was the horizon, he the hub,  
Both bone and flesh, finger and ring of all  
This clangorous sea. Docile, at his toe's touch,  
Each tottering dot stood roundaboutly calm  
And jammed the following others fast as stone.  
The ironical wave smoothed itself out  
To meet him, and the mocking hollow  
Hooped its back for his feet. A spine of light  
Sniggered on the knobbly water, ahead.  
But he like a lover, caught up,  
Pushed past all wriggings and remonstrances  
And entered the rolling belly of the boat  
That shuddered and lay still. And he lay there  
Emptied of his errand, oozing still. Slowly  
The misted mirror of his eyes grew clear  
And cold, the bell of blood tolled lower,  
And bright before his sight the ocean bared  
And rolled its horrible bold eye-balls endlessly  
In round rebuke. Looking over the edge  
He shivered. Was this the way he had come?  
Was that the one who came? The backward bowl  
And all the bubble-pit that he had walked on  
Burst like a plate into purposelessness.  
All, all was gone, the fervour and the froth



Of confidence, and flat as water was  
 The sad and glassy round. Somewhere, then,  
 A tiny flute sounded, O so lonely.  
 A ring of birds rose up and wound away  
 Into nothingness. Beyond himself he saw  
 The settled steeples, and breathing beaches  
 Running with people. But he,  
 He was custodian to nothing now,  
 And boneless as an empty sleeve hung down.  
 Down from crowned noon to cambered evening  
 He fell, fell, from white to amber, till night  
 Slid over him like an eyelid. And he,  
 His knees drawn up, his head dropped deep,  
 Curled like a question-mark, asleep.

## LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH VENICE TWILIGHT

Where 'neath her dark November skies  
 The rainy town of Venice lies,  
 And twilight over the pale lagoon  
 Floats with the sea-born wind, and soon  
 Steals to her shadowy lurking-place  
 In high-arched door and garden space,  
 When sheets of water, green as jade,  
 And palaces of marble fade,  
 And every hall and stuccoed room  
 Is veiled and velveted in gloom:  
 When candles in the growing night  
 Of the vast churches twinkle bright—  
 Then in that dim and rainy hour  
 A solemn bell, in some high tower,  
 Swings slow and grave against the sky  
 And all the Venice bells reply—  
 'Empire, glory, once were ours:  
 From our sun-illuminated towers  
 Fleets we saw come sailing home.  
 O'er the far Ionian foam  
 From our tributary isles  
 They would sail a thousand miles:  
 All their lion-banners bright  
 Dyed our waves with crimson light.  
 The golden East we held in fee,  
 And our blue Empire of the sea,  
 With fleets and banners all are gone,  
 And yet awhile we linger on—'.

## HORIZON

The vast and melancholy sound  
 Floats o'er the sea for miles around  
 Until at last that music dies  
 And rainy darkness fills the skies.

## GOETHE

(Translated by Maurice Baring)

From

## 'A TRILOGY OF PASSION'

I

## TO WERTHER

So once again, much mourned and wept-for Shade,  
 You dare to face the light of day,  
 You meet me and confront me unafraid  
 In meadows newly bright with flowers of May.  
 It is as if at Dawn you lived anew,  
 In the same field where once we drank the dew  
 And when the day's unwelcome toil was done  
 We looked entranced at the departing sun.  
 I, left, you taken: it was ordered so,  
 You led the way—and little did forgo.

The life of man it seems a lordly prize,  
 How fair the day, how vast the midnight skies!  
 And we, embedded in celestial bliss,  
 Have scarcely time to feel the high sun's kiss,  
 Than battles of conflicting aims begin  
 Now with the world, now with the soul within,  
 Not one of us his soul's true mate shall know.  
 An outward darkness hides the inner glow,  
 A shining front my darkened looks belie,  
 And happiness unrecognized slips by.

We think we hold it now. We feel the might  
 Of woman's beauty and of love's delight:  
 As glad as in his childhood's blossoming,  
 The youth like Spring incarnate leads the Spring,  
 What miracle is this? his eyes grow dim.  
 He looks around: The world belongs to him.  
 He goes his headlong way with careless speed,  
 No palaces, no walls his pace impede.  
 As birds around the tree-tops wheel in flight,  
 The lover circles round his heart's delight.  
 He asks, 'though he would leave it, of the sky,  
 To bind his heart, a look of constancy.

But warned at first too soon and then too late,  
There comes a check, he feels the bonds of fate.  
To meet again is good, to part is ill,  
Again to meet again is better still,  
A moment will the waste of years restore—  
But farewell waits malicious at the door.

You smile, and as is fitting, friend, you sigh:  
A parting gave to fame your misery.  
Our hearts for your mishap were proud and sore,  
For good or bad you went for evermore!  
And then the passions clouded in a haze  
Led us along the windings of their maze;  
And we, devoured by anguish without end,  
Must part at last—parting is Death, my friend!  
How sad the poet's song rings in the heart,  
Only not Death, for Death means we must part!  
May one half-guilty whom such sorrows wring  
Be given a god to speak his suffering.

NOTE.—This poem was written by Goethe in 1824 at the age of 75. It appeared in a new edition of *Werther* which was published at that time.

ANNA KAVAN

## NEW ZEALAND: ANSWER TO AN INQUIRY

DEAR JOHN,

It's very complimentary of you to ask me about New Zealand and whether I think you should settle there after the war. I feel flattered that you should value my opinion to that extent. Only, I'm afraid you may have come to the wrong department. You are probably taking it for granted that I can provide you with what is generally called useful information about the place. In that case you have gone wrong, in two ways. First, I have not got any useful information about New Zealand. Secondly, I would not attempt to give it you if I had. The transmission of information is not my department. The only job for which I am qualified as an individualist and a subjective writer is the recording of my personal reactions. And this goes for countries, as well as any-

B

thing else. If you want statistics and facts about farming and climate and social security and the Maori wars and the labour government, the best thing you can do is to spend a day in the library. No, I can't give you the informative low-down which I feel you are expecting, but only a vague account of my own impressions.

However, on the off-chance that you may be interested, your inquiry stimulates me into trying to convey to you something of my private picture of New Zealand, very impressionistic, certainly, and incomplete. But I believe that if you were to collect a sufficient number of such personal sketches from people who have been there you would have the most lively and valuable picture possible. I mean by this that there is much more of the living spirit in Tom, Dick or Harry's confused idea of a country than there is in the factual exactitudes of reference books. From information you get nothing that is really alive—only dry bones. But from Tom, Dick and Harry, with whom I include myself, you can get something very much alive; biassed, inaccurate and fragmentary as it will be.

Well, to begin with, in my picture of New Zealand, the country itself is immensely more important than its inhabitants. This may be because the social instinct is not very highly developed in me; or it may be because the population of the country is so small in relation to its size; or it may just be because of the sheer, overwhelming splendour of the natural scene in those weird islands, to hell and gone down there, near the south pole. Weird isn't the word, really. It needs some more portentous, more sinister word, to describe the land heaved up at a later geological epoch than the rest of the world's land, land tardily shoved up by earthquake from the sea bottom into the light of day. Land evolving without animals; land given over to strange birds, the flightless kiwi, the moa unadapted to danger and preferring disappearance to the compromise of self-preservation. Land so unaccommodated to animal life that huge and majestic trees, survivors of centuries of storms and earthquakes, succumb to the petty nibbling of deer.

It's a place of the greatest natural magnificence, frightening in some ways, but splendid. In some parts stern with the solemn grandeur of sounds and mountains; in some parts densely and darkly matted with immemorial rain forest, two-thousand-year-

old growths of rata, totara, rimu, where, till the coming of man, no single animal ever walked; in some parts steaming and bubbling and spurting with every devilish abomination of boiling spring and geyser that ever erupted out of the volcanic earth; in some parts bare like a desert; in some parts grim like a battlefield with the burnt, broken stumps of trees pointing black fingers of accusation; in some parts green and domesticated with the willows and the orchards and the sheep grazing. But in all parts the country is full of strangeness, with its isolation, and the reversed seasons, and the black swans. You get (I mean, of course, I get) a feeling of the country being in opposition to man; to the white man, particularly. In spite of the farms and the fruit trees and the fat sheep, there seems to be a grim passive resistance somewhere in the background exerting a subconscious influence all the time. The fertility seems superficial, and every now and then there's a sudden hint of the real oppositional background, bleak fissures of soil erosion, or boiling mud pools quietly chuckling to themselves, and in no wholesale glee either. It seems, fundamentally, to be a place of formidable alien power and of animal- and human-life negation. In my picture I see the endless will of the land to shake off the intruders sparsely settled upon it and to return to its original sombre and silent aloofness, no mammal stirring under the grave, enormous, antique trees, no sounds but the sounds of water and wind and the outlandish chiming of bell birds in the vast antipodean hush.

That's what I see, in my picture, of the country New Zealand. Always the desolation, always the splendour, always the loneliness, always the opposition, always the ancient trees, the birds which inhabit no other country, the volcanic mountains, the mud bubbling and chuckling. And always, everywhere, strangeness.

When I look at the towns and the inhabitants of the place, my picture turns itself into something more like an inchoate scenario.

Walking through the residential district of one of the cities between neat modern, all-electric, 3-7 room bungalows, corrugated iron roofs, handy sections, convenient tram and bus, there's a sort of provincial Sunday afternoon feel in the air. The air still, and full of the Sunday smell of roast mutton. The streets empty. The anti-alcohol slogans of the wowzers outside the churches. The bungalows full of the scent of roast meat and the hushed drone of music from radios. Yesterday's papers flap in the

gutters like hooked flounders. It's April, and from the poplar trees, through the stillness, the brown leaves are silently falling. The leaves are piled in front of the Freezing Works like dead birds.

The city is indeterminate. It isn't England and it isn't anywhere else. It's null, it's dull, it's tepid, it's mediocre; the downunder of the spirit. The houses are drowsing, the leaves are falling, the flies are circling, trucks full of sheep's carcasses clatter drearily over the railway bridge, the firescreen worked by the wife of an early settler moulders in the museum.

What you may call the leit-motif of all this is a quiet parochial slowness. People wander up and down the main streets staring into the windows of shops that are full of agricultural implements and meat pies. Everything's shut, there's nothing to do except go to the pub or the cinema, or, if it happens to be the right day, to the races. No music, no theatres, no pictures except an occasional exhibition of local talent, no magazines of what's termed cultural interest.

A confused burbling noise hangs over the whole scene. Burbling of drunks in the pubs, burbling of kill-joy wowers urging the suppression of this and that, burbling of housewives gossiping behind curtained windows, burbling of politicians, burbling of watersiders pampered by their union and lounging around the docks. There's a vague sense of things having gone wrong somewhere. The idea was all right, it was fine, everyone was to have high wages, a place in the sun, free schools, free medical attention, and so on. Then why the impression of officials corrupt and scheming, or bungling about in the background? Why the farm workers hurrying into town to spend all their pay in the public houses? Why the man with hate-sharpened features writing anonymous letters in a closed room? Why the squalid country shacks, deep-south style cabins, botched with wire and hammered-out cans patching the tin roofs, and the crazy dunikins, outside w.c.s listing away from the prevailing wind? Why the conscientious objectors of the last war, whose party platform was built upon no conscription, bringing conscription to their homeland the first of all the dominions?

Predominant shade, you will notice, cast on the human side of the picture: which is only to be expected, because, as I explained previously, the natural scene enormously overshadows the human aspect of my New Zealand view.



Looking away from town life, the picture changes again. There's a wide, undetailed rough-in of empty spaces, enormous tracts of green rolling country, crumpled hill country scarred by erosion, nothing in sight but the sheep endlessly grazing, the homestead small in its trees, remote, and shut off in a life of its own, grim perhaps, or idyllic, unimaginable really, a life that seems to belong to a different era. And then the beaches: with the lovely, inexpressible melancholy of the long sands, utterly desolate between dunes and the greengage waves slowly unfurling. Nothing anywhere except solitude and the sad shore-bird's cry; absolutely nothing but solitude, like a place that hasn't been found yet and perhaps never will be found. Strange lonely dream scene full of lovely sadness. The dream without a dreamer.

The villages in my picture are different again. They only resemble their opposite numbers in England in the fact that everyone in them knows all about everyone else's affairs. They have none of the picturesqueness of the English village, being haphazard collections of wooden bungalows, some incredibly dilapidated, some suburban-genteel, most of them with the appearance of having been roughly knocked together by amateur carpenters at week-ends. The best way of giving an impression of village life seems to me to be to describe a single village in guide-book style, under various headings. Let's take a seaside village and call it Waitahanui, which is a Maori word meaning 'deep water on both sides'.

### *General Description*

Rocky coast with several small sandy beaches and bays. Fine sea views with numerous islands and reefs. Inland, hilly scrub country with some pine plantations and farmland. Roads poor. Store. Post and telephone office. Church service fortnightly. Population fluctuating.

### *Access*

Until recently by boat only. Now by ferry from the city, and bus. The ferries are old, slow, expensive, infrequent, and somewhat dangerous in rough weather. The buses are old, slow, infrequent, and somewhat dangerously driven. The journey should take about one and a half hours, but delays are quite probable.

*Clothes and Equipment*

(1) The usual wear for men and women is (winter) flannel trousers, gum-boots, sweater, large straw hat turned up all round. For the not-so-tough, an overcoat, which may be worn indoors, as the wooden houses are totally unheated except by (occasionally) a wood fire. (Summer) shorts, shirt or singlet, sandals, large straw hat turned up all round.

(2) Everyone has a wheelbarrow and uses it for everything. It will be found more convenient than any of the alternative modes of transportation, horse, bicycle, sack, basket, pram.

(3) A tin with a handle and tight-fitting lid (called a billy) for milk is essential and should be hung on a tree somewhere along the milkman's route.

(4) Fire-wood and chopper.

(5) An electric torch. The darkness at night is primeval, lacking even the mitigation of glow-worms.

(6) For serious fishing expeditions a boat, of course, is required. Cheaper materials are (a) a drag net, (b) a sharp implement for prising oysters off the rocks (illegal).

(7) Liquor according to taste. No alcohol procurable on the spot. Most ordinary provisions can be bought at the store, but any special items should be brought along. As should all toilet articles, reading matter, fruit, vegetables and coffee. A fly-flapper is useful. So is a mousetrap.

(8) Clothes-pegs and line. No laundry facilities available.

*Hotels, Boarding Houses, Restaurants, Tearooms, Bars*

None. But some residents will take summer lodgers. Others will supply hot water for picnics at a penny a time. There is no place where you can eat (except ice-creams at the store), but this is not much loss as New Zealand cooking, except in the best hotels, is rather regrettable, having most of the characteristics of the worst sort of English cooking with the addition of cups of strong tea all through the day.

*Houses to Let*

Wooden, tin-roofed, one-storey shacks (called baches, derivation from the word 'bachelor', 'to lead a bachelor life') can be rented furnished (as the saying is) or unfurnished, with rain-water tanks and more or less total absence of plumbing. But electricity is usual for lighting and sometimes for cooking.

*Sport*

Fishing and swimming. A game of tennis on a mud court is sometimes possible, and it is exercise.

*Other Entertainments and Social Amenities*

None.

*Flora and Fauna*

Native bush some distance inland. Areas of fern, flax and smaller native plants on cliffs. Plenty of fine old pohutukawas sprawling in grotesque Rackham distortions all over the cliffs and down to the water's edge. These are somewhat like cork oaks but much bigger and they erupt sporadically around Christmas time in red flowers like eucalyptus flowers. Kowhais are magnificently tricked out in bright yellow flowers for about two weeks of the year, relapsing into an apparently moribund state for the remaining fifty. Plenty of wattles in great variety, back country covered with manuka, lots of small white stars on straggly, dry, aromatic bushes.

A good assortment of forest-frequenting birds, but not many shore birds except gulls, skuas, terns, gannets and cormorants (called shags here). The only wild animals seen are rabbits, hedgehogs, rats, black velvety mice, and opossums with pink snouts which appear after dark and carry their babies about on their backs. The 'possums are very unpopular because they eat fruit, and when they sit about in the trees their tails hang down like old-fashioned bell-pulls, inviting a tug.

So much for the rural scene. Let's get back again now to that vague sense of something having gone wrong somewhere. A new country, a country so full of splendour and strangeness as this one, ought, one would think, to produce some new and splendid characteristics in its inhabitants. But does it? Well, of course, here and there splendid individuals do emerge, as, for instance, Frank Smith, the ranger at Waikaremoana, a man of real simple magnificence and in close contact with the natural world. And Mrs. Gron, brilliantly blue-eyed, with a magic touch for all growing things, toiling away in the backblocks year after year, in a man's hat and gumboots too often stogged in mud, and utterly undismayed. But my impression of the mass of the people, the townspeople at any rate, and particularly those in the Auckland district, is that there's something lacking in

them. Perhaps it's the humid climate that does it; but anyway they seem to me to lack vitality, warmth, enthusiasm, whatever you like to call it. The women look fine sturdy specimens, like professional tennis players, but walking around their houses and down to the shops is about as much as their energy runs to. The men look hearty and tough, but when you get to know them they seem depleted somehow, frustrated perhaps, and dissatisfied.

It's a queer thing, really. For most of the year, anyhow, in this region, the sun shines and the weather is good. The country's good to look at with plenty of hills in the background and small mountains, some of them even extinct volcanoes. The sea's still better to look at, full of fishes and small islands. The smallest fishes jump up in shoals out of the water to escape from the large fishes, the gannets fold up like umbrellas and dive after fish of all sizes, the cormorants hunt under water for fish and for shellfish, the kingfishers fish from the rocks, the men fish from boats, the gulls hang about in the air, on the water, and on land for any portions of fish which the others may chance to discard. It strikes me that the dissatisfaction round here should be the prerogative of the fish.

Why the dissatisfaction, then, amongst the human inhabitants? Why the lack of energy, lack of cordiality, why the defensive attitude?

It's only their manner, somebody tells me. Sturdy Colonial independence. The difference between the old ways and the new.

Well, then, all I can say is that I don't like their new manner. I don't like the postman who doesn't answer when you say good morning, it makes no difference if you say it once, twice, a hundred, or ten thousand times, he's shut up like a clam, you'll never get a response out of him, his independence goes on getting sturdier at every encounter.

I don't like the defensive attitude towards newcomers, the old insular 'Here comes a stranger, let's throw a brick at him' attitude.

What happens when a stranger enters what's called intellectual circles? Do the sturdy Colonial intellectuals care if Einstein or the Cham of Tartary is in their midst? Brother, they do not care, they do not wish to hear from you, and unless you can speak louder than they can you're as good as dumb. I suppose they're far too independent to display any interest in anyone from outside.

I don't like the set-up between the sexes, either, the men getting together around the bottles and the women getting on with the chores. The men worrying about the Labour Government and the women worrying about something in the oven. The women not allowed a drink in a public place after five o'clock. Some wowser writing in the papers that a decent woman's place in the evening is in her home.

Individual New Zealanders, when you get to know them, are as fine as individuals anywhere; but why all the defensive reserve? Why is getting acquainted such heavy going? What's behind all the display of sturdy Colonial independence?

Well, if you ask me, it's dependency, and to these people independence means everything because, precisely, they haven't got it, they're still tied up to the home which they call England, they've never cut the umbilical cord, and when they realize their position they are full of inward trembling, and they depend on defending themselves with the defensive manner.

They depend on defending themselves with the good old middle-class atmosphere their predecessors brought with them from Bodmin and Nottingham, with china dogs on the mantelpiece, and the shades three-quarters down over the windows to keep the carpets from fading and the neighbours from peeping in.

Of course, you can see their point, they've got to defend themselves somehow against all that loneliness of water and the South Pole and the bush, all the hoary, enormous, spectral trees standing massed against them, and getting them down, because, though they keep on burning and felling the trees, there's still the huge mass of nature, indestructible, desolate, indifferent, dangerous nature, the oceans and the ice cap and the antique forests and the earthquakes, massing upon them, bearing down on them, separating them from Bodmin and Nottingham; and who are they, anyhow?

They are caused to tremble, being only a few transplanted ordinary people, not specially tough or talented, walking in gumboots or sandshoes among the appalling impersonal perils and strangeness of the universe, living in temporary shacks, uneasily, as reluctant campers too far from home.

They are on the defensive because if they didn't put something between them and the awful, patient, immemorial bush and the imminent Pole and the ambiguous smile of the darker

race, these things would fall in on them and crush them. They would be crushed thin like dead leaves and the Polar south wind would blow them away to nowhere.

Hence the depleted vitality, the weariness of the secret eternal struggle, the heart unreconciled, but at home in another place, the mind preoccupied and closed against strangers, being closed against the menacing strangeness of an alien hemisphere.

At least, that's how it looks to me in my picture. And how should I presume to criticize the people who venture to trust themselves to those weird, unearthly, resplendent islands, lost, lonely islands, implacably blockaded by empty antarctic seas? In my picture these people look mad and heroic because they have courage to go on living at all in the face of that alien terror and loveliness, nothing between them and the South Pole.

MARTIN TURNELL

MOLIÈRE

'C'est une étrange entreprise que de faire rire les honnêtes gens.'

*La Critique de l'École des Femmes.*

# I

THE seventeenth century in France is curiously deceptive. On the surface it appears to be simple and uniform. In reality it was complex and multiform. We are faced not with one age, but with several ages; not with a static society, but with a society in a continual state of evolution. The different ages overlap, merge into one another so that conventional divisions into historical periods are of little assistance. We need fresh standards, and a useful approach is suggested by a passage in M. Pierre Maillaud's admirable book on France.

'Throughout the Classical Age', he writes, 'the fundamental object of philosophy, literature, and art remains the study of Man, of his nature, of his passions, of his motives, of his social habits and oddities: man as an individual to whom the existing social order provides only an artistic background, and not man against an existing order, for there is no sign of political reformism among its writers.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>France (The World of Today), O.U.P., 1942, p. 55.



The single-minded concentration of the masters of the Classical Age on their subject is one of the main sources of their greatness. When it is looked at as a whole, the work of the philosophers, the moralists and the poets of the seventeenth century is seen to be one of the most searching examinations of human nature that has ever been made. Its completeness depends paradoxically on the acceptance by individual writers of the limitations of their art, on their concentration not simply on man, but on certain facets of his character, and the facets that they chose were largely determined by social and political changes and changes in sensibility which were going on beneath the surface of society. We never meet Man in their writings; we meet instead the Rational Man, the Sceptical Man, the Social Man or the Natural Man. Labels are always dangerous, but as long as we realize that there was room for innumerable variations within the individual approach they help us to understand the relations between a particular writer's conception of man and the age in which he wrote. With these reservations, the century can be divided broadly into three ages and the ages named after the three greatest French dramatists—Corneille, Molière, Racine.

Corneille wrote at a time when France had been disrupted by the wars of religion and was trying to set her house in order. His theme is the Man of Honour, the imposition of order—a moral order—on the chaos of human desires. Racine stands at the other extreme. He belonged not to an age of reconstruction, but to an age which had reached its zenith and was beginning to disintegrate from within. His interest lies in the Man of Passion, in the collapse of order before the swirls of unruly desires. Molière occupies a position midway between the two extremes. The centre of his world is the Natural Man and he studies the way in which perverted natural instincts may become a danger to the community. He believed more deeply perhaps in his age than either Corneille or Racine. He was the laureate of *la bonne Régence*, of an age when society seemed for a moment to have reached stability, when in spite of conflicting 'philosophies', society was not threatened and there was time to examine man's 'social habits and oddities', to laugh over his extravagances.

Although a precise, clear-cut conception of man emerges from the work of each of the three poets, the change from the

Age of Corneille to the Age of Molière, or from the Age of Molière to the Age of Racine was not the result of any violent upheaval. The changes were gradual, the shades and subtleties almost infinite. They can be detected in a shifting of the focus, in the sounding of a fresh note which was not always perceptible to contemporary readers. Indeed, the cross-currents of the century were so complex that not only the passing of one age, but the beginning of the next, was sometimes manifested in the work of the same writer. We can see now that in *Nicomède*, which was written in 1651, eight years after the last of the four great tragedies and after a series of imitations of his own style, Corneille not only wrote a masterpiece, but a masterpiece in a new manner. *Prusias* is a richly comic creation in which the possibilities of Félix in *Polyeucte* are exploited, and it points the way straight to the Age of Molière. Yet when Molière tried to do the same thing in 1658 the result was a failure. *Dom Garcie de Navarre* did not fail because Molière was writing against the grain of the age, as one feels that Racine was in *Alexandre le Grand*, where the Cornelian phrases stick out jaggedly among the smooth alexandrines. It failed because *Nicomède* was so far in advance of its time that in 1658 Molière was not sufficiently mature to benefit from its discoveries. It was only in the *Misanthrope*, for which Molière significantly lifted some of the best passages from *Dom Garcie*, that *Nicomède* bore its full fruit, and lines which had sounded hollow and unreal in Dom Garcie's mouth are in perfect harmony with Alceste's character. The *Misanthrope* is the meeting point of three ages. It is the finest flower of the Age of Molière, but it also looks back in a healthy sense to the Age of Corneille and forward to the Age of Racine. Compare Auguste's

Je suis maître de moi comme de l'univers;  
Je le suis, je veux l'être.

with Alceste's

Je veux qu'on soit sincère, et qu'en homme d'honneur  
On ne lâche aucun mot qui ne parte du cœur.

and you see at once that the times have changed. You notice that the 'man of honour' has ceased to be a man of *action* and become a man of *words*—an apostle of plain speaking. You notice, too, that there is no genuine volition behind Alceste's

petulant *Je veux*. He is incapable of imposing a positive discipline first on himself, then on society, as Auguste does. When faced with the obstacles which Corneille's characters successfully overcome, he simply abdicates:

Je n'y puis plus tenir, j'enrage, et mon dessein  
Est de rompre en visière à tout le genre humain.

His determination crumbles at once and his energy dissolves in an explosion of useless rage which drives him towards a negative goal—the abandonment of society and the hunt for

un endroit écarté

Où d'être homme d'honneur on ait la liberté.

These lines are a forcible illustration of the nature of the changes which had taken place. The heroic age is past; the Cornelian Man of Honour has become a figure of fun, a windbag who leads an eccentric life outside society. Rodrigue turns into Alceste, Polyeucte into Orgon. The true representatives of the Age of Molière are the *honnêtes hommes* with their reasonable tolerant outlook, their solid unheroic virtues.

Alceste is a comic figure, but a comic figure of a new kind, for he is already endowed with the power of introspection, the deadly lucidity of the heroes of Racine, and his

Mes sens par la raison ne sont plus gouvernés,  
Je cède aux mouvements d'une juste colère.

recalls at once Hippolyte's

Je me suis engagé trop avant.

Je vois que la raison cède à la violence.

In Molière's characters the energy and drive, which in Corneille bring order out of chaos, are transformed into a fanaticism which potentially at least is as dangerous to society as the 'violence' of Racine.

'Molière', wrote Sainte-Beuve in one of his memorable overstatements, 'Molière, c'est la nature comme Montaigne, et sans le moindre mélange appréciable de ce qui appartient à l'ordre de Grâce; il n'a pas été entamé plus que Montaigne, à aucun âge, par le Christianisme.'<sup>1</sup> Discussions of the relative value of the three writers are fruitless, but Sainte-Beuve's *mot* helps to explain the popularity of Molière in this country—the country

<sup>1</sup> *Port-Royal*, III, Paris, 1848, p. 198.

of Shakespeare—and the sad neglect of Corneille and Racine. The English reader is disconcerted by the world of France's two greatest tragic poets. He does not know what to make of the booming voices extolling *honneur* and *gloire* and exhorting him to acts of heroic virtue. He is no more at home in Racine's world, which threatens to dissolve at any moment and to engulf its inhabitants in their own furious passions.

Molière presents a very different picture. He has his roots deep in the earth and he introduces the English reader to a world where he is on firm ground, a solid, opaque world built in the normal dimensions and filled with the ceaseless noise and bustle of the *quartier*:

Ces carrosses sans cesse à la porte plantés,  
Et de tant de laquais le bruyant assemblage.

We find it very difficult to visualize the physical appearance of Racine's characters. The whole of the drama is concentrated into 'the world within'; passion glows like a single white hot filament in the surrounding darkness; and clothes are only mentioned to show that even the flimsiest garment is an intolerable constraint to the vibrating nerves, the tormented bodies:

Que ces vains ornements, que ces voiles me pèsent.

Molière's characters not only wear clothes like another, the clothes are a part of the characters. The subtle, flexible style, which faithfully registers the accent of the individual voice—the whine of Orgon, the ranting of Harpagon, the childlike lisp of Agnès—possesses vivid pictorial qualities which place the characters compellingly before our eyes: Tartuffe in his peculiar monkish habit calling on his servant to tighten the hair shirt; and Alceste, unforgettable as 'l'homme aux rubans verts'. 'Il a au cœur la tristesse', said Sainte-Beuve of Molière; but though a sombre note runs through some of his greatest plays, our abiding impression is not one of sadness. There is an immense *joie* in the created world, in the world of *pourpoints*, *collets*, *rubans* and *canons*.

As Molière's genius ripens, the panorama of a whole age unfolds before us. He is not confined to any one section of the community like Corneille with his warriors or Racine with his princes and princesses. His vision has greater width than theirs; his work is a *comédie humaine* which embraces society from top

to bottom, a society of courtiers, *marquis*, doctors, lawyers, prudes, peasants, lacqueys, of amorous old men and lecherous young women.

It is not difficult to see why this should be so. The formative influences were the old French farces, the *Commedia dell' Arte* and direct experience. Molière spent twelve years of his youth as an actor-playwright touring the French provinces with his troupe. Critics have drawn fanciful pictures of the weary actors trapesing from place to place with their stage properties and putting up in barns, and one writer has hinted salaciously at happy promiscuity in the warm hay. Life under such conditions was certainly very different from Corneille's uneventful youth at Rouen or Racine's visit to his uncle's comfortable rectory at Uzès, where he waited impatiently for the 'bon bénéfice' which never turned up. It left a lasting mark on Molière's work, for it was during the *Wanderjahre* that he came into close contact with the people and acquired the habits of acute, humorous observation of his fellow-men.

His early farces, in which faithless wives plant the horned cap well and truly over the ears of their elderly husbands or send the unfortunate husbands to market trussed up in sacks like pigs, in which *coups de bâton* and *pots de chambre* abound, are pure slapstick. They do not seem particularly funny today, but they treat of themes which are deeply rooted in the consciousness of the race and which appeal directly to primitive instincts—laughter, mockery, hatred, envy. They may seem far from the famous *réalisme comique* of his greatest work, but in reality there is a direct connection between the two. Although Molière abandoned these crude methods, he retained many of his early themes and his appeal was always to natural human feelings which are stifled beneath the conventions of civilization. The light-hearted farce of *la Jalousie du barbouillé* and *l'Etourdi* develops into the grim farce of parts of the *École des femmes* and *Georges Dandin*. One of the chief means of getting a laugh in the early farces was repetition. In the mature comedies repetition becomes a skilful device for revealing a character's state of mind. The constant refrain of 'le pauvre homme', in the celebrated scene in *Tartuffe*, shows that a gulf has opened between the world of common experience and the world of Orgon's private mania. The whole trend of Molière's art was away from the

comedy of situation to the comedy of character. We can see how the comic exaggerations of his early work are transformed into the strange manias which possess Arnolphe, Orgon and Alceste, and a German critic has coined the word *Durchpsychologisierung* to describe the process.

It must not be thought that Molière's work is a mere gallery of eccentrics. His starting point is always the individual man or woman; but his characters are all representative, all rooted in the society of their time, and he goes on to make an anatomy of society in which some of the deepest as well as some of the most controversial problems of the day are debated. The *Précieuses ridicules*, with its frontal attack on preciosity, was his first serious essay in social criticism. In the plays which followed he examined the position of women, the state of religious belief and the nature and place of medicine in society. It was because his vision transcended the limits of his age that his characters are symbols of universal significance which belong to all time.

## II

The year 1662 was an important one in Molière's life. It was the year of his marriage to Armande Béjart. This event has been a gift to the gossip-writer and to the critics who delight in discovering autobiographical references in his plays. We do not know with any certainty who Armande Béjart was, but it seems probable that she was a younger sister of Molière's friend and partner, Madeleine Béjart. Molière's enemies took a different view and it was not long before they were accusing him 'd'avoir épousé la fille et d'autrefois avoir couché avec la mère'. At the time of his marriage Molière was forty and his wife eighteen. It is not altogether surprising that enemies and critics alike should have regarded *l'École des maris* and *l'École des femmes* as attempts to solve personal problems—the problems of the middle-aged man who marries a young girl—and already in his own time people were saying that in begetting his own wife Molière had begun her education even earlier than Arnolphe.

A great imaginative writer naturally draws on his own experience for this work, but there is no evidence for the view that in the *École des maris* Molière was attempting to explore the prospects of his forthcoming marriage or that Arnolphe in the *École des femmes* is in any sense 'a portrait of the artist'.



In both plays the emphasis falls on *école*, on education for marriage. The *École des maris* is a charming comedy in which Molière contrasts two different methods of bringing up young women—the narrow, jealous method of Sganarelle which leads to deception and disaster, and the tolerant and reasonable spirit of Ariste, who lets Léonor go her own way, marries her with her own consent and no doubt lived happily ever after.

The *École des femmes* is not among Molière's supreme achievements, but it marks an immense step forward. For here in essentials and for the first time we find the mature Molière. The maturity is nowhere more apparent than in the transformation of Sganarelle into Arnolphe, the first of the great comic characters. When Arnolphe declares:

J'ai suivi sa leçon sur le sujet d'Agnès,  
Et je la fais venir dans ce lieu tout exprès,  
Sous prétexte d'y faire un tour de promenade,  
Afin que les soupçons de *mon esprit malade*  
Puissent sur le discours la mettre adroitement,  
Et, lui sondant le cœur, s'éclaircir doucement.

he not only sounds a fresh note, he also looks forward to Philinte's warning to Alceste:

Non, tout de bon, quittez toutes ces incartades.  
Le monde par vos soins ne se changera pas;  
Et puisque la franchise a pour vous tant d'appas,  
Je vous dirai tout franc que *cette maladie*,  
Partout où vous allez, donne la comédie. . . .

The critical words are *mon esprit malade* and *cette maladie*. For all Molière's principal comic characters are *malades*. More than any other great comic writer of the time he realized that comedy is essentially a serious activity. His work is a study of some of the chief social maladies not merely of his own, but of all time seen against the background of a stable order. In this play it is jealousy, in *Tartuffe* religious mania and in *le Malade imaginaire* the cult of ill-health. The ravages of the *maladie* are very extensive. It undermines the natural human faculties and encloses the victim in a private world of his own disordered imagination. One of the fundamental traits of the *malade* is the fanatical attempt to impose the standards of this private world on society, as Alceste

tries to 'change the world' and Arnolphe tries to bring up Agnès according to his own unbalanced theories:

Dans un petit couvent, loin de toute pratique,  
Je la fis élever selon ma politique,  
C'est-à-dire ordonnant quels soins on emploierait  
*Pour la rendre idiote autant qu'il se pourrait.*

This sinister declaration, this open attempt to destroy a woman's natural faculties, shows to what extent the *malade* has become a menace to the community. The remedy lies in collective action, in the destruction of the anti-social tendencies by laughter and the introduction of sane values into the comic world. This brings us to the *honnête homme* who makes his first appearance in the *École des femmes*. Chrysalde is not of the stature of Cléante or Philinte and his view that it doesn't matter whether you are a *cocu* or not as long as you take your misfortune like a gentleman is crude in comparison with their urbane, polished discourses on *la juste nature* and *la parfaite raison*; but in spite of his shortcomings he does stand for a norm of tolerance and good sense.

I have never felt convinced by the theory of certain French critics that Molière's characters are in some sense abstractions, that he shows us the Jealous Man, the Hypocrite, the Misanthrope or the Miser, while a modern novelist like Balzac shows us a particular miser in a particular French province in the nineteenth century. There is a clear distinction between Shakespearean comedy and Jonson's 'comedy of humours'. It seems to me that Molière is closer to Shakespeare than he is to Jonson and that so far from probing more deeply into human nature than Molière, Balzac bears a striking resemblance to Jonson. Classical comedy certainly imposed limitations, but what is remarkable is that, in spite of these limitations, Molière managed to present such a comprehensive study of the complexities and contradictions of human nature. Argan is not merely a *malade imaginaire*, he is mean and cruel and cheerfully prepared to sacrifice his daughter's happiness to secure free medical advice for himself. In the *Femmes savantes* what really interests us in Armande is not her ridiculous intellectual pretensions, but the study of the angry frustration of the sexually acquisitive woman.

The *École des femmes* is primarily a study of jealousy, but

Arnolphe is no more a simple case than Molière's other characters. The originality of Molière's approach is well brought out by Ramon Fernandez when he suggests that the point of the play lies in the transformation of the *homme-père* into the *homme-mari*. It is true that Arnolphe loves his ward as a husband, while she can only love him as a father, but this is not the whole of the problem. It must not be thought that the prominence given to cuckoldry is a light-hearted borrowing from traditional French farce or that Molière's treatment of it has anything in common with Wycherley's in his crude adaptation of the play. Arnolphe's anxiety to 'create' a wife who will be faithful to him springs from a primitive but deep-seated fear of being a cuckold. There is no need to dwell on the psychological implications of this fear which is so pervasive that it turns jealousy into a form of sexual mania. When Arnolphe declares:

Je veux pour espion, qui soit d'exacte vue,  
Prendre le savetier du coin de notre rue.  
Dans la maison toujours je prétends la tenir,  
Y faire bonne garde, et surtout en bannir  
Vendeuses de ruban, perruquières, coiffeuses,  
Faiseuses de mouchoirs, gantières, revendeuses,  
Tous ces gens qui sous main travaillent chaque jour  
A faire réussir les mystères d'amour.

the crux of the passage lies in the lurid *mystères d'amour*, and the words gain their effect from the contrast with the normal life of the *quartier* which Molière evokes with his characteristic skill. For in Arnolphe's disordered imagination the whole of this world is undermined by the subterranean activities of the purveyors of love, as the whole of his personality is undermined by his mania. When in another place he cries:

Et cependant je l'aime, après ce lâche tour,  
Jusqu'à ne me pouvoir passer de cet amour.  
Sot, n'as-tu point de honte? Ah! je crève, j'enrage,  
Et je souffletterais mille fois mon visage.

there is no mistaking the voice. It is the voice of all Molière's great comic characters, the voice of impotent, exasperated denunciation of a world which they cannot 'change' and in which they have no place.

The voice also explains one of the secrets of Molière's art.

'His characters', said Paul Bourget, 'are, so to speak, composed in two layers—

La première est faite du tassement des idées spéciales qui constituent le ridicule, la seconde est faite du véritable terreau humain . . . A de certains moments dans la comédie, la première couche saute et la seconde apparaît.<sup>1</sup>

Although this comment suggests that there is something a little mechanical about the construction of Molière's characters and underestimates, perhaps, the extent to which their peculiarities are rooted in their personality, it underlines one important factor. In the central passages in the comedies there is a sudden eruption of subterranean instincts into the world of everyday experience and it is this that gives Molière's work its special resonance. At such moments the mind of the spectator is suspended between two impulses—pity and laughter—which superficially appear to exclude one another, and comedy is felt to be a continual oscillation between tragedy and farce or between what one writer has lately called the *vie tragique* and the *vie frivole*. It is not, however, an alternation of tragic and comic emotions. The two are fused into a single new emotion which differs from them both and is proper to comedy. Life is suddenly perceived under a twofold aspect and this is the core of the comic poet's experience.

It is not the tranquil homilies of Chrysalde which place Arnolphe's *maladie* in its true perspective, but the simple words of Agnès as she speaks of her love for Horace:

Il jurait qu'il m'aimait d'une amour sans seconde,  
Et me disait des mots les plus gentils du monde,  
Des choses que jamais rien ne peut égaler,  
Et dont, toutes les fois que je l'entends parler,  
La douceur me chatouille et là-dedans remue  
Certain je ne sais quoi dont je suis toute émue.

In these lines, in which we seem to catch the very tone of the girl's voice and which derive much of their force from the contrast with Arnolphe's overwrought declarations, we see the healthy, natural human feelings asserting themselves, expressing themselves in spite of the lack of adequate concepts on the part of the speaker. It is the ruin of Arnolphe's horrifying *politique*.

<sup>1</sup> *Œuvres complètes: II Critique, Études et portraits*, Paris, 1900, p. 271.

## III

No play written in the seventeenth century roused more bitter controversy than *Tartuffe*. It seemed to religious people to be a direct challenge to Christianity and was roundly denounced in pulpit and pamphlet. In spite of the King's personal sympathy, Molière was not allowed to perform it in public and for five years the play led an underground life in constantly altering versions. It was read, apparently with approval, before the Papal Nuncio and his suite, in the salons and at the home of Ninon de Lenclos. Although the ban was raised in 1669, *Tartuffe* long remained a battle-ground. The debate which began with Bourdaloue and Bossuet echoes down the centuries, disturbing peaceful academic backwaters and ruining the objectivity of literary critics. At the end of the last century Brunetière made it the text for a long essay in which he sought to prove that Molière was an exponent of *la philosophie de la nature* and the forerunner of the materialist philosophers of the eighteenth century. Fernandez has alleged mischievously that Orgon is a representative Christian and Mauriac leaves us with the impression that it was only Molière's Christian death which excused him in the eyes of the author of *Destins* for having written *Tartuffe*.

The doctrinaire approach has done much to prevent a true appreciation of one of the greatest masterpieces of the French theatre. Molière was not a deeply religious man, but in spite of constant persecution from the *dévots* there is no reason to suppose that he was anything but a believing Christian. In *Tartuffe* he dealt with one of the burning questions of the time; but though he could not resist baiting the *dévots*, he approached a serious question with the seriousness and detachment of a great artist.

*Tartuffe* is first and foremost a sociological study of the corrosive influence of a decadent religiosity on the life of the community, and as such it seems to me to be unsurpassed in European literature. Molière does not study its effect on the community as a whole; he has no use for general statements. He selects a particular unit of society—the family—and he draws with incomparable colour and vitality the picture of a prosperous middle-class family in the reign of Louis XIV. There are the middle-aged husband and his young and rather worldly second

wife, the two children—the headstrong Damis and the timid, wilting Marianne who is in love with Valère—the crusty, puritanical mother-in-law, the urbane, reasonable brother and the magnificent *bonne*.

Tartuffe is a superbly comic creation; he possesses the same life and vitality as the Wife of Bath or Falstaff and his character is perhaps more varied. He is a composite figure. He represents all the main varieties of contemporary religious abuse and is the channel through which they infect the sane, balanced life of the family and almost bring it to disaster. He is a good deal more besides.

‘Tartuffe’, wrote Edmond Jaloux in a valuable note on the play, ‘est gourmand, paresseux, libertin, intéressé, mais il n’est tout cela que par moments, et pour ainsi dire, par crises, il n’entend nullement dissimuler son être véritable sous le masque de l’hypocrisie. *C’est son être véritable qui est hypocrite* . . . Soyez sûr que, quand il est seul dans sa chambre, il ne rit pas de la naïveté du bonhomme Orgon, mais qu’il dit dévotement son chapelet, non sans l’interrompre de temps en temps pour songer à Elmière avec regret.’<sup>1</sup>

Tartuffe is not a purely religious figure. He is a scoundrel, is the eternal ‘confidence man’. Since the society which produced him was in the main a Christian one, nothing was more natural than to choose religion as the means of cheating the gullible Orgon out of his possessions and seducing his wife. At other times he employs other means. Tartuffe is the sham clergyman who collects for a non-existent charity or the sham soldier who sells bogus news about your son who has been reported missing at the front; but he is also the soap box orator and the editor of the small sectarian paper, whether religious or political; he is even the political leader with his smooth assurances and promises. For the crux of the matter is that, in spite of his viciousness, Tartuffe is in his way genuine—genuine in that his hypocrisy is an integral part of his character—and deceives himself as well as other people. It is, indeed, his soft corruption—admirably brought out by Molière in the language used by Tartuffe and Orgon—which makes him such a menace to the community.

Brunetière has said that Orgon is as much the centre of the

<sup>1</sup> *L’Esprit des livres*, 1<sup>re</sup> série, Paris, 1923, pp. 6, 7 (italics mine).

play as Tartuffe, and this is true. It is Dorine, the servant, who provides the first clue when she observes of him:

Nos troubles l'avaient mis sur le pied d'homme sage,  
Et pour servir son prince il montra du courage;  
Mais il est devenu comme un homme hébété,  
Depuis que de Tartuffe on le voit entêté.  
Il l'appelle son frère et l'aime dans son âme  
Cent fois plus qu'il ne fait mère, fils, fille et femme.

The focal word is *hébété*. Instead of enriching the personality by building on the natural human qualities, this sort of religion has the reverse effect. It undermines what is sane and healthy and this is the basis of Molière's attack. Dorine's criticism is reinforced by Orgon's naïve admission:

Oui, je deviens tout autre avec son entretien:  
Il m'enseigne à n'avoir affection pour rien,  
De toutes amitiés il détache mon âme,  
Et je verrais mourir frère, enfants, mère et femme,  
Que je m'en soucierais autant que de cela.

Orgon is a type that is well known to us. He is what a modern writer has called, in another context, a *rat de bénitier*, but in his case the *maladie* has become radical and dangerous. His attitude is not one of Christian resignation; it is the reverse of Christian. He is hypnotized by Tartuffe and as surely as Arnolphe and Alceste he has lost contact with the world of common experience and retreated into a world of private mania.

The effects of his inhibition are far-reaching and their variety reveals the wealth and profundity of Molière's understanding of human nature. They lead to a decline which is at once intellectual, moral and emotional. He does not scruple to break his promise to allow his daughter to marry Valère and plays the tyrannical father in order to force her to marry Tartuffe. He makes over his possessions to him without considering the claims of his family, turns a secret entrusted to him by a friend into a ridiculous *cas de conscience* and finishes by betraying the confidence to Tartuffe. In short, his *hébétude* leads to the disruption of all values.

In order to exhibit the ravages of this false conception of religion to the full, Molière provided Orgon with two foils—Cléante and Dorine. Cléante has been the subject of lively



controversy and dons have debated his religious views in learned footnotes<sup>1</sup>. His critics, however, have not always written about him with proper detachment. Sainte-Beuve, for example, regarded him as the pivot of the play because it fitted in with his theory that Molière's work was a defence of *la morale des honnêtes gens* or, as it is now called, *la morale laïque*. Brunetière, on the other hand, declared that the part was superfluous and was simply designed to mislead the public about Molière's personal religious opinions, because to have admitted that Cléante was Molière's spokesman would have been fatal to his theories about Molière's 'philosophy'.

The best comment on these theories is provided by one of Cléante's characteristic pronouncements:

Les hommes, la plupart, sont étrangement faits !  
 Dans la juste nature on ne les voit jamais ;  
 La raison a pour eux des bornes trop petites ;  
 En chaque caractère ils passent ses limites ;  
 Et la plus noble chose, ils la gâtent souvent  
 Pour la vouloir outrer et pousser trop avant.

This is the voice of true civilization, the reflection of a world in which it is natural to speak of measure and proportion. Cléante's importance lies precisely in the fact that he stands for the incorruptible intellect cutting through the tangled confusions of Orgon's mind, stripping away the subterfuges of the *faux dévots* and revealing them in their true light. When he distinguishes between true and false devotion and makes his plea for a devotion '[qui] est humaine, est traitable', it seems to me that his words must be taken at their face value and that we have no right to assume that they are a smoke screen to hide his creator's supposed unbelief.

It is left to Dorine to deal with the consequences of human perversity in another sphere. She is guided not by careful distinctions and elaborate arguments, but by sound instinct and by a natural wisdom which belongs to her class. Orgon's senile enthusiasm over the prospect of his daughter's marriage to Tartuffe:

<sup>1</sup> 'Une petite question indiscrète: ce Cléante fait-il ses Pâques? Je le crois. Certainement cinquante ans plus tard il ne les fera plus.' (Sainte-Beuve, op. cit., p. 215 n.)

Ensemble vous vivrez, dans vos ardeurs fidèles,  
Comme deux vrais enfants, comme deux tourterelles.

is countered by the sturdy common sense of Dorine's

Sachez que d'une fille on risque la vertu,  
Lorsque dans son hymen son goût est combattu.

Her most striking sallies are the description of the prude—too long to set out here—in Scene i and her first encounter with Tartuffe.

Tartuffe does not appear until Act III and his entry is one of the high lights of the play:

Laurent, serrez ma haire avec ma discipline,  
Et priez que toujours le Ciel vous illumine.  
Si l'on vient pour me voir, je vais aux prisonniers  
Des aumônes que j'ai partager les deniers.

The accent falls ostensibly on the disciplining of unruly desires, but in place of true discipline the desires are driven underground. They become 'prisoners', but prisoners of a very dangerous and subversive kind. With an absurdly exaggerated gesture Tartuffe throws his handkerchief over Dorine's bosom:

Couvrez ce sein que je ne saurais voir;  
Par de pareils objets les âmes sont blessées,  
Et cela fait venir de coupables pensées.

The description of the breasts as *de pareils objets* strikes a false, unhealthy note and Dorine's reaction is characteristic:

Vous êtes donc bien tendre à la tentation,  
Et la chair sur vos sens fait grande impression?  
Certes, je ne sais pas quelle chaleur vous monte;  
Mais à convoiter, moi, je ne suis pas si prompte,  
Et je vous verrais nu du haut jusques en bas,  
Que toute votre peau ne me tenterait pas.

This onslaught strikes exactly the right note. It is a gust of fresh air which for a moment dissipates the hot, stuffy, erotic mist which surrounds Tartuffe. The language possesses the crude, racy vigour of the peasant living in close contact with the earth. Dorine is a symbolical figure. Her voice is a primitive voice; it represents the primitive folk-element which is present in nearly all great art down to the seventeenth century, and it is the absence of this element from the slick, cynical comedies of Molière's English contemporaries which makes them shallow

and empty and explains the thinness and poverty of their language. Dorine joins hands with Shakespeare's peasants. She stands for the norm on which a great civilization was founded. It was because Molière himself believed so firmly in the life of the senses that sexual intrigue, which is a deviation from the norm, is given such prominence in his work.

Tartuffe's encounter with Dorine is followed by the magnificent scenes in which he attempts the seduction of Elmire. What is strikingly original in these scenes is the way in which Molière explores the connection between a debased religion and the sexual instinct. His handling of his medium is triumphantly successful and the verse has a subtlety and brilliance which is not surpassed in any of the other plays. Tartuffe's starting point is the perfectly orthodox premiss that all earthly beauty is a reflection of divine beauty:

Ses attraits réfléchis brillent dans vos pareilles;  
Mais il étale en vous ses plus rares merveilles.

He then contrives by an adroit mingling of the clichés of devotional and erotic writing to turn her into a being who is partly saint and partly mistress and whom he proceeds to invoke. When he says:

Nos sens facilement peuvent être charmés  
and J'aurai toujours pour vous, ô suave merveille,  
Une dévotion à nulle autre pareille

we detect in the alternation of the hissing s's and the liquid l's and m's the sudden intake of the breath, the sudden catching back of the saliva as desire rises. For the movement of sexual desire, which he refers to furtively as *cette ardeur secrète* and *un feu discret*, follows the movement of the invocation like an insidious undercurrent wrapping itself round and round the strange, fantastic Elmire whom he has created, fretting and nibbling at her in the attempt to undermine her resistance and stifle her scruples.

In the next scene between the two the criticism becomes more direct. When Tartuffe remarks:

Selon divers besoins, il est une science  
D'étendre les liens de notre conscience,  
Et de rectifier le mal de l'action  
Avec la pureté de notre intention

Molière is simply delivering a frontal attack on casuistry and the famous method known as *la dévotion aisée*. The trite, banal rhythm provides the appropriate comment on this form of intellectual perversity.

The most important line of all, however, is Tartuffe's

Ah! pour être dévot, je n'en suis pas moins homme.

Molière condenses the whole of his philosophy into this sidelong glance. He knew as well as anyone that the human race is one, that we belong to one another. The basic fact is our humanity and even Tartuffe is a 'man', though his humanity has become twisted and warped by his vices. The lesson is driven home in the closing lines of the play when Cléante reproves Orgon for threatening Tartuffe and bids him ask the king for lenient treatment. Molière's tolerance and his humanity are among his most endearing traits and his sanity is nowhere more apparent than in his recognition that

Les hommes, la plupart, sont étrangement faits!

As the play develops it is interesting to notice the reactions of the different members of the group to the debased religion with which they have come into contact. In Tartuffe, Orgon and Madame Pernelle it produces a marked and progressive deterioration of character. In Cléante and Dorine it has the reverse effect; it causes the healthy organism to react vigorously, to apply itself to the expulsion of the intruder and the mitigation of the damage which has already been done. Elmire's reactions are of a purely practical character; she is not interested in theory, but only in averting the danger which threatens her home, and this turns her into a thoroughgoing opportunist.

Although moral victory is achieved by the unmasking of Tartuffe, the family is suddenly faced with complete disaster and is only saved by the timely intervention of the 'grand Prince'. The last scene, in which the Exempt steps in and marches Tartuffe off to prison, has been described as a *deus ex machina*, a graceful tribute to King Louis, and one of Molière's editors has actually suggested that it is so ill-written that it must be an interpolation. There are plenty of *négligences* in Molière's plays, but whatever may be said of the rest of the speech, the immense conviction behind

Nous vivons sous un prince ennemi de la fraude

is unmistakable. It is not too much to say that the weight of the whole play is behind this single line. Molière believed in the fundamental decency and sanity of the existing order. With the removal of the alien element and the conversion of Orgon and Madame Pernelle to a *dévotion traitable* this order reasserts itself.

The suppression of *Tartuffe* was a serious blow to Molière. He was already at work on the *Misanthrope*, but in order to keep the company together he had to produce a new play at once. I have only space for a brief mention of *Dom Juan* which seems to me to be one of Molière's three greatest plays. It had its première in February 1665 and though it enjoyed considerable success it soon became and remained a subject of acrimonious controversy. In our own time journalists like Paul Souday saluted *Dom Juan* not only as a portrait of the artist, but as a portrait of themselves and the play as a text-book of free-thought which had anticipated their own views by two hundred years and stated them with a power and persuasiveness to which they could scarcely pretend.

The truth is rather different. Molière's *Dom Juan* has little in common with the *Don Juan* of legend or the melodramatic figure who was so popular on the seventeenth-century stage. The play is a companion piece to *Tartuffe*. Molière drew on the *libertins* for his materials as surely as he had drawn on the *dévots* in the earlier play, and his attitude towards them is not noticeably more sympathetic. He submits the problem of extreme incredulity to the same searching and dispassionate scrutiny as the problem of extreme credulity in *Tartuffe*. *Dom Juan* is the rootless intellectual aristocrat who has been corrupted by his unbelief and whose mind is bent on destruction. He has the same representative importance as Orgon, though one may feel that Molière would have been a little disappointed by the spectacle of his modern counterparts.

#### IV

The *Misanthrope* is by common consent the greatest of Molière's plays, but attempts to discover the nature of its peculiar excellence have sometimes led critics into unprofitable ways. It has been the main support for the Romantic critics' theory of 'the tragic Molière', and other writers have contrived to suggest that it is in

some way 'deeper', 'more serious', 'more profound' than the rest of the plays. Its pre-eminence seems to me to lie not in greater depth or profundity, but in a greater variety of tone, a wider social reference, more complex and more delicate shades of feeling.

'Il n'a pas voulu faire une comédie pleine d'incidents', said Visé in a commentary which is thought to have been published with Molière's approval, 'mais une pièce où il pût parler contre les mœurs du siècle'. There is one striking difference between the *Misanthrope* and plays like the *École des femmes* and *Tartuffe*. Molière does not confine himself to the study of the psychology of an individual seen against the background of a stable society. His irony is turned on society as well as on Alceste and the play ends, as we shall see, not with the restoration of order, but with a mark of interrogation.

One of the best ways of discovering the meaning of the play is to consider the use of the word *chagrin*:

## ALCESTE:

Mes yeux sont trop blessés, et la cour et la ville  
Ne m'offrent rien qu'objets à m'échauffer la bile;  
J'entre en une humeur noire, en un *chagrin* profond,  
Quand je vois vivre entre eux les hommes comme ils  
font . . .

## PHILINTE:

Ce *chagrin* philosophe est un peu trop sauvage.  
Je ris des noirs accès où je vous envisage . . .

The *humeur noire* and the *chagrin profond* are a matter of deadly seriousness for Alceste, but it is clear from the change of tone and his *chagrin philosophe* that they have a different value for Philinte. It is characteristic of the peculiar ambiguity of the play and of Philinte's place in it that we should feel doubtful at this point whether Alceste's *chagrin* is or is not a laughing matter. There is still room for doubt when Philinte observes four lines later:

Je vous dirai tout franc que cette maladie,  
Partout où vous allez, donne la comédie.

He drops the tone of easy banter. The *chagrin* is now described as *cette maladie*; but though we are meant to take the word literally, it is still a *maladie* which in the eyes of the world *donne*

*la comédie*. There seems to be an obvious conflict of values. The *chagrin* has a different significance for different people. The doubt lies in deciding what importance should be attached to the valuations of Alceste, Philinte and *le monde*. Are they all right or all wrong, or partly right and partly wrong?

The word recurs all through the play, and as the play unfolds we perceive that it has affinities with other words. Alceste declares vehemently in another place:

Et parfois il me prend des mouvements soundains  
De fuir dans un désert l'approche des humains.

Célimène remarks bitterly of the prude Arsinoé:

Elle tâche à couvrir d'un faux voile de prude  
Ce que chez elle on voit d'affreuse solitude.

Now the *désert* is both objective and subjective. All the characters on whom Molière turns his irony are in a greater or lesser degree conscious of their own interior emptiness, of their *chagrin* or their *affreuse solitude*. This explains their restless activity, their desperate preoccupation with social events, with gossip and *galanterie* as well as Alceste's wild denunciation of minor social abuses. They are all subterfuges, are attempts to escape from the interior emptiness by losing themselves in the distractions of the everyday world. When at the close of the play Alceste's *chagrin* drives him into the *désert*, his *physical* exile from society is the logical outcome of the *psychological* exile which is studied with such profound insight.

Alceste's character is presented by means of a triple conflict—the conflict with social convention, with justice and with Célimène. It is noticeable that he speaks of convention, the loss of his lawsuit and his unhappy love affair in the same tone of nervous exasperation. This shows that he attaches the same importance to all three, though it is clear that they are very far from being of equal importance. His cult of sincerity is a fetish and if his principles were adopted, social intercourse would come to an end. There is more to be said for his other preoccupations. Philinte admits that he has a grievance over the unfortunate lawsuit and Célimène confesses that she has treated him badly. But though they sympathize with him, they are at one in condemning the violence of his denunciation and the extravagance of his remedies. This, as we shall see, is the crux of the matter.



There is an interesting passage in the first scene which throws a good deal of light on Alceste's state of mind:

Non, je ne puis souffrir cette lâche méthode  
Qu'affectent la plupart de vos gens à la mode;  
Et je ne hais rien tant que les contorsions  
De tous ces grands faiseurs de protestations,  
Ces affables donneurs d'embrassades frivoles,  
Ces obligeants diseurs d'inutiles paroles,  
Qui de civilités avec tous font combat,  
Et traitent du même air l'honnête homme et le fat.

What is striking about these lines is the curious sense of unreality, is the sense that we are watching a Punch-and-Judy show. The focal word is *contorsions* and it colours the rest of the passage. The element of caricature is deliberate. This is not abstract denunciation of real people: it is society as it appears to Alceste. We feel ourselves looking at it through his eyes and seeing a world of grinning, gesticulating marionettes, going through their grotesque performance as some unseen showman pulls the strings. For Alceste's violence leads to a form of hysteria—Molière's word is *emportement*—in which the actual world is transformed into a comic nightmare, reminding us a little oddly perhaps of a Disney cartoon. His *rappports* with the actual world are only intermittent. He is continually rebounding off its polished surface into the world of private mania where he can indulge his *chagrin*. What distinguishes him from the other characters is an extraordinary insight into his own feelings to which I have referred earlier. There are moments when he suddenly forgets his grievances against society, drops the tone of violent denunciation and sees himself as he really is—not a reformer, but a man sadly perplexed by his passion for an empty, frivolous society woman. When Philinte expresses surprise that he should prefer Célimène to Éliante, Alceste answers quietly:

Il est vrai: ma raison me le dit chaque jour;  
Mais la raison n'est pas ce qui règle l'amour.

It is at such moments that we become aware of his immense superiority over the brittle society which is trying to laugh him out of criticisms that are felt to be a threat to it. In spite of his distorted outlook and unreasonable behaviour, he is a moving as well as a comic figure. There is no doubt that it was Molière's

intention to make him so. For in the *Misanthrope* there is a subtle variation of the traditional pattern of the plays. Although Philinte is Molière's spokesman in many places and provides a background of sanity which contributes to the poise of the play, his rôle is a shifting one. We do not feel, as we do with Cléante, that the whole of the play is behind his words and the explanation is to be found in Éliante's observation on Alceste in Act IV, Sc.i.:

Dans ses façons d'agir il est fort singulier;  
 Mais j'en fais, je l'avoue, un cas particulier,  
 Et la sincérité dont son âme se pique  
 A quelque chose en soi de noble et d'héroïque.  
 C'est une vertu rare au siècle d'aujourd'hui,  
 Et je la voudrais voir partout comme chez lui.

It would not, perhaps, be true to say that Éliante represents Molière's views more completely than Philinte, but she is the only wholly sympathetic character in the play. In the *Misanthrope*, as in *Tartuffe*, Molière felt the need of two spokesmen, but the function of Éliante and Philinte goes far beyond that of Dorine and Cléante. Dorine and Cléante complete one another, but Éliante qualifies the rôle of Philinte. Her words display a fresh attitude towards the principal character. She minimizes Alceste's peculiarities and by placing the emphasis on his 'rare virtue' she corrects Philinte. There is always a foundation of good sense in his criticisms. In spite of his exaggerations this is true of his attacks on convention, and Éliante's reference to his sincerity intentionally recalls his: 'Je veux qu'on soit sincère.'

It follows that in the *Misanthrope* Molière criticizes his own standards. When Philinte remarks, with his customary urbanity:

Tous ces défauts humains nous donnent dans la vie  
 Des moyens d'exercer notre philosophie;  
 C'est le plus bel emploi que trouve la vertu;  
 Et si de probité tout était revêtu,  
 Si tous les cœurs étaient francs, justes et dociles,  
 La plupart des vertus nous seraient inutiles . . .

do we not feel that though his logic is unexceptionable, the attitude that he is defending is in danger of becoming abstract and unreal? Is there not a gap between life and thought which can only be closed by the more human and more generous approach of Éliante? Does it not overlook the fact that man is not a mere

logician and that 'the exercise of our philosophy' cannot impose order on the tangled feelings and desires which Molière perceived as clearly as Racine? Philinte speaks in another place of Éliante as *solide et sincère* and Alceste echoes the thought when, torn by doubts over Célimène's fidelity, he remarks:

Enfin, quoi qu'il en soit, et sur quoi qu'on se fonde,  
Vous trouvez des raisons pour souffrir tout le monde.

For nearly all the characters are looking for something *solide et sincère* on which to base their lives, but they meet with disappointment at every turn. Convention, justice and love prove equally hollow and unreal, and they suddenly find themselves face to face with the void.

Critics have rightly stressed the importance of Alceste's love affair with Célimène. It is, as François Mauriac remarks, the side of his character by which 'il nous devient fraternel'. Now Célimène is the perfect representative of the society that Alceste is attacking. The conflict takes the form of a tug-of-war. Célimène tries to make him conform to the standards of her 'set': he tries to draw her into his own world, to make her follow him into the 'desert'. 'I have no illusions about her', he says to Philinte, but

. . . sans doute ma flamme  
De ces vices du temps pourra purger son âme.

Alceste, Célimène and Éliante form a triangle. Alceste places himself at a point outside society. Célimène is completely absorbed in it. Éliante occupies an intermediate position. She is of society, but entirely uncontaminated by it. The only way of salvation for Alceste, the only way back to the norm of sanity and common sense, is marriage with Éliante and he refuses it. When she speaks of his character as possessing 'quelque chose en soi de noble et d'héroïque' she means what she says. Alceste is potentially 'heroic'—the *en soi* is important—but his heroism is undermined by his weaknesses. He does not possess the toughness of the reformer, but he is too honest and too fanatical to compromise with society. His denunciation becomes a form of self-indulgence, a substitute for action. He is always looking yearningly towards the 'desert' where he can play at being 'a man of honour' and his very real virtues are condemned to frustration and waste.

D

The play does not close with the restoration of a stable order or with another triumph for *la juste nature*. It is not the lines in which Philinte extols *la parfaite raison* or expounds the virtues of philosophy that echo in the mind. It is Alceste's

Mais la raison n'est pas ce qui règle l'amour.

Society in the person of Célimène and her retainers—now on very bad terms with one another—retires discomfited from the stage by one exit and Alceste departs for the 'desert' by another. The catharsis lies in the clarifying of our feelings, in the perception that social health is in the last resort a matter of individual responsibility in which facile slogans and neat philosophical maxims are of no avail.

## V

I have made extensive use of the word *malade* in discussing the characteristics of Molière's art, but though this is his own word it needs to be used with great circumspection. I do not wish to give the impression that I regard the plays as case-books or as studies in abnormal psychology which anticipate the methods and findings of the modern novelist. The eccentricities and social abuses which he criticizes are placed in their true perspective. They are seen to be flaws in an otherwise healthy organism. For Molière believed in his age in a way that is impossible for the contemporary writer. In spite of the wealth of detail with which they described the life of their time, the great French novelists who came after Constant and Stendhal—Balzac, Flaubert and Proust—do not seem to me to be the heirs of Molière. They are much closer to Racine. Their work is in the main a study of *une maladie des sentiments* which bears a superficial resemblance to Molière's approach, but their concentration on one aspect of their characters is so complete that the *sentiment* tends to dissolve into the *maladie*. Flaubert's description of Frédéric Moreau at the end of *l'Éducation sentimentale* might well serve as an epigraph for them all: '*la véhémence du désir, la fleur même de la sensation était perdue*'. This limits their value as social criticism and, indeed, as criticism of any kind. For the more we read them, the more evident it becomes that their sensibility only touches life at comparatively few points. They do not show the human being with his foibles and his passions—the characteristics which alternately join him to and divide him

from society—in relation to an existing order as Molière does. They are only interested in him in so far as he is the product of his immediate environment and his feelings conditioned and corrupted by it. The accent should therefore fall on the breadth and variety of Molière's vision of man and society, on his sense of society as a coherent whole, on his fundamental sanity and on that wisdom which belongs peculiarly to the great European masters.

## MATILA GHYKA

# FROZEN MUSIC

ALTHOUGH the famous comparison of architecture to frozen or petrified music is so frequently repeated, we find its authorship attributed to many different writers: the monk Colonna (author, about A.D. 1500, of the *Hypnerotomachia Polyphili*), Leonardo, Schelling, Novalis, Goethe and Walter Pater. The truth is that Schelling is responsible for the 'frozen music' image, and Goethe, later, for the 'petrified music' one.<sup>1</sup> If we add here Leibniz's statement that 'Music is an exercise of secret arithmetics, and the one who indulges in it does not know that he is dealing with numbers' (letter to Goldbach, April 17th, 1712), and the more recent observation that 'Music is to Time what Geometry is to Space' (Francis Warrain), more succinctly: 'Music is Drawing in Time', we can not only realize that this music-architecture comparison or simile is more than a happy suggestion, but also may place ourselves into the frame of mind most suited for understanding the evolution and present state of Western Architecture.<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental ideas which controlled its development and evolution are indeed Plato's theory of proportions, itself a direct application to space of the musical theory of intervals (rhythm in space could be made to correspond directly to rhythm in time, because the Greeks in studying the intervals of the diatonic scale

<sup>1</sup> 'Since it (architecture) is music in space, as it were a frozen music . . . ' (F. Schelling, 1775-1854, *Philosophie der Kunst*).

<sup>2</sup> This term includes the Old World (Egyptian, Iranian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque schools) minus China and India, and 'post-Columbian' America.

considered the ratios of the actual lengths of the lute strings)<sup>1</sup> and the extension to space of the concept of 'eurhythmy', meaning here the harmonic linking together of the proportions as regards length, surface or volume characterizing a given architectural or decorative composition. All these concepts are, of course, of Pythagorean and Neo-Pythagorean inspiration, correlated to the symphonic, harmonic conception of the Cosmos, of the rhythmic correspondence between World-Soul and individual souls, between Universe, Temple, and human body, later on simplified as correspondence Macrocosmos-Microcosmos; the 'Principle of Analogy', established by Thiersch<sup>2</sup> as the basic law of Western Art, is already found in the Pythagorean 'Hieros Logos' or Sacred Speech, collected by the direct disciples of the Master of Samos.<sup>3</sup>

The correspondence between musical and architectural composition, between the linking of rhythms in time and of proportions in space, is explicitly mentioned in Vitruvius and brought into light again by the revival of the Platonic theory of proportions during the first Renaissance (Luca Pacioli, Alberti), revival also of the Pythagorean axiom: 'Everything is arranged according to Numbers.'<sup>4</sup> This mathematical and 'harmonic'

<sup>1</sup> Whereas we consider the frequencies of their vibrations. But frequencies per second and lengths of musical strings are inversely proportional to each other, so that the two methods are equally legitimate.

<sup>2</sup> 'We have found in considering the most remarkable architectural productions of all periods that in each of these *one fundamental shape is repeated* so that the parts by their adjustment and disposition reproduce similar figures. Harmony results only from the repetition of the principal figure throughout the subdivisions of the whole.' (*Die Proportion in der Architektur.*)

<sup>3</sup> 'You will know, as far as it is allowed to a mortal, that Nature is from all points of view similar to itself.'

The *Macrocosmos-Microcosmos* correspondence dear to Occultists and Rosicrucians, as also the hermetic 'Id quod inferius—Sicut quod superius', are derived from this same ideology.

<sup>4</sup> The harmonic, symphonic conception of Art and Life was still firmly integrated in the Elizabethan mind:

'There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings . . .  
Such harmony is in immortal souls . . . ' (Shakespeare)

' . . . his voice was propertied  
As all the tunèd spheres.'

(*Idem*)

(Footnotes continued on page 189)

point of view reigned without contestation during the first Renaissance, and characterizes later the whole spirit of Baroque Architecture. Incidentally Baroque Architecture (in Rome, Spain, Portugal, Southern Germany) illustrates Spengler's observation that the architecture of a period of civilization is in some way a reflection of its geometry; the spiral, ellipse and sinusoid appear everywhere, whether as controlling shape or as ornament, in Borromini's, Longhena's, Balthazar Neumann's and Churrigerra's buildings, and we can say that a beautiful baroque church is not only 'a metaphysical theatre' (Fechter), but also a repertory of algebraical curves, of 'fluxions' of well-ordered surfaces and volumes.

This predominantly scientific character of Renaissance and Baroque Architecture, the importance given to the theory of Proportions and the 'Theory of Space' (the study of the five regular 'platonic' and the thirteen semi-regular 'archimedian' polyhedra and the interplay of proportions therein), thoroughly developed not only by the architects, but also by painters like Piero della Francesca, Leonardo and Dürer, caused in the seventeenth century the anti-geometric or intuitionist reaction whose manifesto was formulated in France by Perrault<sup>5</sup>; and since then there has been an alternation of pendulum swings, periods during which the 'Theory of Space' and of Proportions, and the necessity of symphonic composition, are forgotten, followed by periods when these laws are rediscovered, and geometric planning comes into favour again. This conflict between planned composition and intuition or inspiration is still going on, not

Also

'Ah, Beauty! Syren, fair enchanting Good, . . .

Still Harmony, whose diapason lies

Within a Brow; . . .'

(S. Daniel)

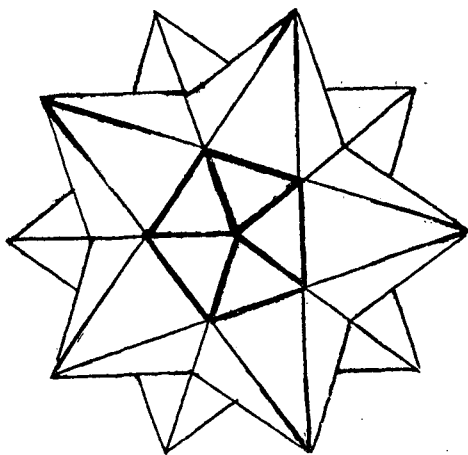
This Pythagorean attitude of mind reasserts itself unexpectedly in Prof. Elton's most interesting essay on 'English Prose Numbers':

'Beauty is Form, and number is one of the constitutive elements of Form, as all things are determined by Number.'

(I apologize for retranslating from my French translation of Prof. Elton's sentence, not having his text at hand.)

<sup>5</sup> Here is Perrault's outburst against co-ordinate or harmonic planning: 'The reasons which make us admire beautiful works (of art) have no other foundations than chance and the workers' caprice, as these have not looked for reasons to settle the shape of things, the precision of which is of no importance.'

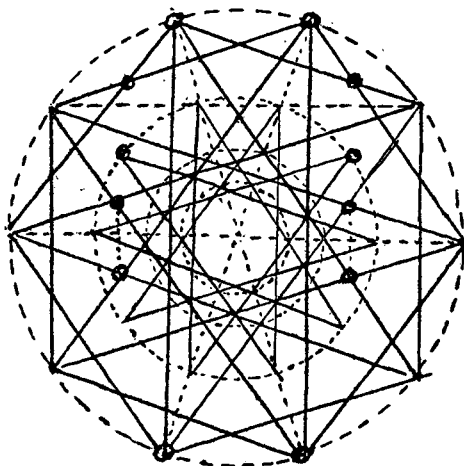




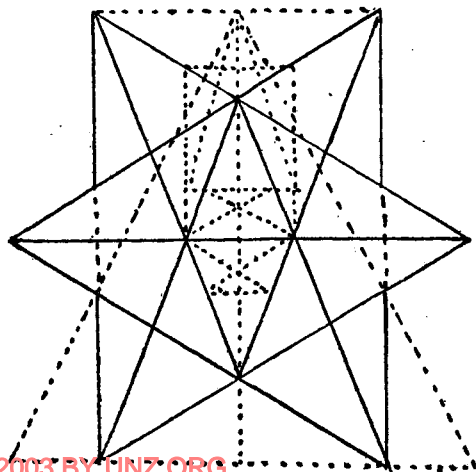
A. Orthogonal projection of  
12-pointed star-dodecahedron

A

B. Another projection giving key  
of Gothic Master Diagram



B



C. Another, giving key to proportions  
of human face and body

only in the realm of architecture. In connection with poetry, we had not long ago in France the 'Poésie Pure' controversy; here Mallarmé has been the high priest and master of the 'symphonic' school. Correspondence and analogy of sounds, of metaphors, of meanings, are the instruments of his technique, analogy and concatenation of analogies (like for the Pythagoreans and the Greek and Gothic architects) his keys to the visible and invisible world.<sup>1</sup> Of his disciples, Paul Valéry is the most successful; in the opposite, 'inspirationist' camp in French poetry, one could single out the late Countess de Noailles. It is interesting to note that Edgar Allan Poe (in his explanation of 'The Raven'), Walt Whitman and P. Verlaine claim to belong to the school of quasi-mathematically planned composition.<sup>2</sup>

In our time, or rather in the period between the two World Wars, the concepts of proportion and 'symphonic' planning have, in architecture and decorative art, come into their own again; this revival is due in part to the investigation pursued in different countries about the canons of Greek and Gothic Architecture (F. M. Lund in Norway, Jay Hambridge in the United States, Professor Moessel in Germany) and about the quasi-esoteric transmission of these canons and controlling diagrams through innumerable generations of architects and Master Masons.

We have not the space necessary to show how these independent but convergent investigations have actually given us the key to the master diagrams of Greek and Gothic plans, and proved conclusively their Pythagorean inspiration; we can only mention the part played in those diagrams by the golden section,<sup>3</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> Metaphor is the condensed transposition in the realm of images of the geometric proportion (A is to B as C is to D), the *analogia* of Vitruvius.

<sup>2</sup> Verlaine writes:

'Nous qui ciselons les mots comme des coupes  
Et qui faisons des vers émus très froidement.'

Also (in a letter quoted by H. Mondor in *Verlaine et Mallarmé*): 'Une autre guitare qu'il serait temps aussi de reléguer parmi les vieilles lunes . . . c'est l'Inspiration—ce tréteau!—et les Inspirés—ces charlatans!'

<sup>3</sup> The golden section (*extreme and mean ratio* of Euclid) is the most remarkable asymmetrical way of dividing a line (or any measurable thing, surface, volume, weight, etc.) in two parts, such that the largest is to the smallest as the whole is to the largest. This ratio is the leading proportion in the pentagon, the pentagram (star-pentagon) and the correlated decagons, and (in space) in the dodecahedron, icosahedron and the two star-dodecahedrons obtained by prolonging the sides or surfaces of dodecahedron and icosahedron.

pentagram (secret pass sign of the Pythagorean brotherhood, symbol of health, harmony and love, and geometrical representation of a 'nest' of golden sections), the decagon and star-decagons, the dodecahedron (the fifth regular body, quoted by Plato in the *Timæus* as symbol of the harmony of the Universe, also development of the pentagon in three dimensions) and the 12-pointed star-dodecahedron (development in three dimensions of the star-pentagon or pentagram; its projections in the plane give us the key, not only of the principal Gothic master diagram, but also of the ideal Greek canon of proportions for the human body).

Concurrently with these discoveries in Æsthetical Archæology, another group of investigators, trying to bring forth the mathematical laws of biological and crystalline morphology and growth, reached parallel conclusions about the importance of the golden section in biology, specially as regards the human body and plants, bringing thus an unexpected confirmation to the speculations of the Pythagorean and Platonic Schools, to the cryptic Vitruvian allusions to the correlation between the temple and the human body, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the mathematical laws governing living shapes and living growth were thus shown to fit in curiously with the theories and patterns of Greek and Gothic Æsthetics discovered by the archæological line of investigation, still a third school of thought and research contributed to the revival of Mathematical Æsthetics. This was a consequence of the reaction against the sterility of nineteenth-century architecture with (on the Continent especially) its blind copying and mixing of Renaissance

<sup>1</sup> The most important books in this line of research were published in England: *The Curves of Life*, by Sir Th. Cook; *Growth and Form*, by Prof. D'Arcy Thomson; *Lectures on the Principle of Symmetry*, by F. M. Jaeger. To quote Jaeger:

'A certain preference for the pentagonal symmetry, in the case of animals as well as of plants, appears to exist here, symmetry clearly linked to the important proportion of the "golden section" and unknown in the world of inanimate matter.'

The pentagon, the dodecahedron and the golden section, which play such a part in the morphology of living systems and in living growth, never appear in inorganic geometrical configurations (crystals), where only symmetries based on the triangle, the square and the hexagon are shown. The mathematical explanation for this is quite simple and based on the angular conditions for homogeneous equipartition in space.

or Louis XVI 'clichés', reaction which found its strongest expression in Le Corbusier's lashing statements.<sup>1</sup> The battle-cry of this new 'functionalist' school is Le Corbusier's untranslatable 'la maison est une machine à habiter', the argument, Sullivan's 'Form follows Function', the justification and programme, Sir Walter Armstrong's 'Beauty is Fitness expressed'.

The result of the *functionalist* attitude was to bring back to architecture not only the 'Theory of Space', the science of pure volume, but also the science of stresses; engineer and architect joined hands,<sup>2</sup> and here too the dynamics of the living growth in animals and plants were shown to fit in with those of human buildings; shyly first, artists began to admit that in some productions of this collaboration, American silos and factories, could be found the abstract beauty of Byzantine or Romanesque volumes, that the Golden Gate Bridges could give the same æsthetic impression of superbly balanced stresses as a Gothic cathedral.

The architect must, of course, retain the supreme control, impart to his creation the organic unity<sup>3</sup> without which it cannot be considered as a work of art. Le Corbusier himself found that the functionalist conditions allow the architect a certain freedom in the disposition of his structural elements, and rediscovered the eternal value of the proportion, of the interplay of proportions within an organic design. He rediscovered also the usefulness of the golden section as a 'regulating theme', as shown in his plan for the projected 'Mundaneum' (World Centre of Studies and Artistic and Scientific Co-ordination in Geneva) and

<sup>1</sup> *Vers une Architecture*, etc.

'L'architecture n'a rien à voir avec les styles . . .'

'Les architectes de ce temps, perdus dans les "pochés" stériles de leurs plans, les rinceaux, les pilastres ou les façades de plomb, n'ont pas acquis la conception des volumes primaires. On ne leur a jamais appris cela à l'école des Beaux-Arts.'

'Les architectes ont aujourd'hui peur de la géométrie des surfaces.'

'L'architecture est le jeu savant, correct et magnifique des volumes assemblés sous la lumière.'

<sup>2</sup> To quote again Le Corbusier:

'L'ingénieur, inspiré par la loi d'économie et conduit par le calcul nous met en accord avec les lois de l'Univers.'

'Assujettis aux strictes obligations d'un programme impératif, les ingénieurs emploient les génératrices et les accusatrices des formes. Ils créent des faits plastiques limpides et impressionnants.' (*Vers une Architecture*.)

<sup>3</sup> 'Art is the power of creating living organisms, out of stone, clay, colours, tones, words.' (Schumacher, *Handbuch der Architektur*.)

for his villa at Garches. Perfume manufacturers enclosed their wares in Platonic or Archimedian polyhedra; goldsmiths and jewellers in Paris and New York used Hambidge's and Moessel's dynamic symmetry and harmonic division of the circle for the design of their cups and jewels.

Let us here quote Claud Bragdon, an American representative of what we may call the humanistic-functional school of architecture, which superimposes a 'symphonic' point of view over the engineer's scheme of volumes and stresses:

'The architectural designer should master the principles of Dynamic Symmetry (the name, taken from Plato's *Theaetetus*, given by J. Hambidge to the science of 'commodulating' surfaces and volumes) in the same spirit that a composer of music learns harmony as a useful and necessary part of his equipment for self-expression'.

Also:

'A work of architecture may be significant, organic, dramatic, but it will fail to be a work of art unless it be also *schematic*. It means (this word) a systematic disposition of parts according to some co-ordinating principle.'

And finally, in order to conclude, as we have opened, on Schelling's useful analogy:

'If a work of architecture is "frozen music", it is so only by reason of a harmonious relation subsisting between its various parts—otherwise it is only frozen noise.'

BASIL JONZEN

## A VISIT TO MR. SICKERT AT BROADSTAIRS

INVITATION to lunch with Sickert, the painter of Venice, Dieppe and Camden Town, that great veteran English Artist of Sunday ennui, music halls and iron bedsteads.

Four of us had been invited to visit him next Sunday at his house near Broadstairs.

He had even promised to meet our train. What hospitality from an old man. Our cup of anticipation was running over.

'Of course,' said his niece when I told her, 'you will never recognize Uncle Walter. He changes so. Last time I saw him he had shaved off all his hair except for a fringe and behind that, perched on his head, sat a brilliant red fez. He wore,' she added, 'a tail coat, bottle green with age, black and white check trousers, elastic-sided boots and coffee-coloured spats.'

I remembered his frame maker saying, 'I'm afraid, Sir, really I am afraid of giving offence to the gentleman. You see, I don't always recognize Mr. Sickert, he dresses so different every time he comes into the shop, anything from a deep sea fisherman to a Victorian toff.'

Consciously and unconsciously we counted the days. On Saturday we lunched at the Italian restaurant in the street where we always lunched. Today was different. We met to discuss what present we could bring to the Master.

It was a delicate problem and at last solved by Waldie. 'Cigars,' he said, 'large ones and the best'. We paid our bills and walked to a cigar shop in Piccadilly Circus. We chose the largest Romeo and Juliettas that you could wish to see.

I woke on Sunday morning and looked out of my window. Fitzroy Street was bathed in misty sunlight. It promised to be a glorious day. I dressed, ran down the four flights of stone staircase, slammed the front door and joined the other three walking briskly to the taxi rank at the end of Rathbone Place.

Our taxi took us through Soho, down the Mall, past Buckingham Palace to Victoria.

We were ready in the window seats of a third-class compartment. Our journey of homage had started. Waldie had taken charge of the cigars wrapped in their brown paper parcel.

We sat in silence until one of us asked the time. 11.30. Soon the question was asked again, then frequently. 12.15, 12.30, 12.45. We had arrived.

There on the platform, no mistaking him, was the great man himself. A man of large gestures, a ruddy complexion framed by shaggy grey hair and beard. He wore a violent orange tweed suit, no collar or tie, only a collar-stud in his shirt-front flashed in the sun. His carpet slippers gave him the appearance of a woolly bear.

We stepped out of the carriage and introduced ourselves. 'Good morning, Sir,' I said.

'Yes, yes, splendid, yes, I was expecting a parcel,' he said. 'Most annoying, really very aggravating—hasn't arrived. I've asked the station master. He hasn't got it.' After muttering to himself for some while, he said, 'Ah, I've got a taxi waiting, by jove, all ready for us.'

He ushered us past the ticket collector.

'In you get, no, no, I'm last,' he insisted. We made room for him on the back seat, Lamb shifting to a tip-up seat. 'I sit on that,' he said with an air of finality. 'I like it.' The taxi had been a limousine many years ago. Now it smelt of dust. Its speaking tubes, smelling-salt bottles and knick-knacks rattled and rolled together while the engine, coaxed by the cabby, wheezed and spluttered through Broadstairs.

I was much aware of Mr. Sickert's discomfort on the tip-up seat, but before I could offer to change places, he had started once more to tell us the story of his lost parcel.

Waldie interrupted him. 'Er — Mr. Sickert, we have brought you a parcel. We hope — —' but before he could continue his carefully prepared speech the great man had grabbed the present offered to him and had tucked it under his arm without even as much as offering a thank you.

At the same moment the taxi drew up outside the house at St. Peters.

We followed Mr. Sickert out of the cab and the cabby drove off, respectfully touching his cap and not bothering to collect his fare.

I am sure all the cabbies in Broadstairs must have known Mr. Sickert. His love of taxis is proverbial.

Mrs. Sickert stood by the open front door. She had heard the noise of the taxi and had come to greet us.

'These are my young friends. Look after them,' he said, and disappeared into the house.

She was a middle-aged woman of timid and kindly disposition. After our introduction she asked us if we would like to take off our coats and showed us the oak hat-stand in the hall.

'Now I'm sure you would like to wash after the journey. How dirty you get sitting in trains.'

'When you're ready we will have some sherry.'

'You can wash in there, and at the end of the passage is the lounge,' she explained, and left us.



We filed into our sanctuary and locked the door. We looked despairingly at each other in silence, bemoaning the fate of our present. When we returned to the hall the sun was shining through the coloured glass in the front door and casting its pools of colour on the floor.

Mrs. Sickert was standing in the doorway of the lounge.

'Ready? Good. Let's have some sherry,' she said in a clear but quiet voice. We followed her into a room of leather upholstery and books. She poured out a glass for each of us from a decanter on a side table.'

'Now you must tell me your names. I'm so glad you've come. It's good for us to have the young painters come to see us.'

We talked for some time about pictures, she was always interested when we talked of her husband's work, and made us describe them.

'Yes, yes, I know the one,' she would say. 'It has a tree on the left-hand side,' or 'he painted that in 1912'. Otherwise her mind would wander. At last she said, 'I wonder where Walter can be'. She walked to the door and called 'Walter, Walter, where are you?' All four of us followed dumbly, why, I do not know. She called again. No reply. We crossed the passage. Mrs. Sickert opened the door of a study, walked through to the far door, across a further passage. Again she called and this time we heard 'In here, my dear'. The voice came from a room at the end of the passage. We entered. Mr. Sickert sat with his back to us, at a round table covered with a green baize tablecloth fringed with pom-poms. On it cigars were scattered in all directions. The lid of the box had been ripped off its back and the wrapper and string thrown on the floor.

He picked up each cigar in turn, sniffed it and gently laid it down again, and turned in his swivel chair to face Mrs. Sickert. Very solemnly he said, 'No more pictures to be painted until these are smoked'.

We stood in a half circle round the table and watched with pleasure.

'Thank you very much, dear boys, what a splendid thought. By the by, you might tell the dealers when they come to see me that I like cigars and tell them the brand.'

Mrs. Sickert interrupted, 'Lunch is ready. We couldn't find you.'

'Hurray, I'm as hungry as a lion,' he said, jumping up from the table. 'I'll carve the joint. Let me lead the way.'

He took his wife's arm and led us to the dining room. The silver on the snowy white table-cloth twinkled at us in the sunshine as we entered. At the far end a saddle of lamb had been laid on an oval blue and white dish. Its background was as rich as itself. The fire glowed through the fiddle-back slats of the mahogany chair and the whole was founded upon a red Turkey carpet.

Mr. Sickert picked up the carving fork and dug it like a trident into the meat. He took up the knife and called to his wife to be seated. Using her forefinger like a wand she deftly placed us at the table.

I sat opposite her. She looked very lovely, dressed in light mauve. Behind her was a mahogany sideboard with cut-glass decanters standing in a row. Green silk hung in folds on a brass rail at the back. Engravings of Venice broke up the flowery patterned walls.

'Look at the joint, what a piece of painting,' Mr. Sickert spoke with enthusiasm. 'It's like that Dutch fellow's work, rich stuff; it's bubbling over with good things, what's his name, my dear, what's his name, Dutch, you know.'

'Rembrandt, dear,' his wife said, but Sickert was busy carving and didn't hear.

Sizzling slices of the tender meat were laid on our plates, passed to Mrs. Sickert to fill with vegetables and set in front of us.

'Eat,' commanded Mr. Sickert and leapt out of his chair, pulled open the cellarette in the sideboard and brought out a bottle.

'Plenty of hock, boys, drink up and let's be merry. It's here for us and plenty more.' Plop, he had the cork out of the bottle and was filling the glasses to overflowing.

'Another, hurray,' he said, and plundered the cellarette. Plop, the bottle was uncorked and slammed down with a bang on the table. He had once more taken his chair at the head of the table, swigged down half a glassful of the wine and tossed a load of lamb and french beans into his mouth as tho' on a pitchfork.

The sun's beams burst through the window, across the table and lit up the wallpaper beyond. It was as if the happy party was being blessed, certainly illuminated. We felt radiant.

Mr. Sickert raised his glass, swallowed the hock and raised the empty glass to the wallpaper. 'Well, my boys, I may not be a classical painter, but by jove, I'm a painter of wallpaper.'

The old man had picked up the second bottle and, dancing round the table in his bedroom slippers as softly as a ballet dancer, poured the hock into our glasses. 'We'll have more, me boys—drink.' Another bottle was brought from the cellarette, the cork drawn and stood on the table.

'More meat anyone, come on, eat,' and turning to Mrs. Sickert, who was sipping her wine, he said, 'who did you say painted it, my dear?' 'I didn't,' remonstrated Mrs. Sickert. 'You asked me who the famous Dutch painter was you had in mind. It must have been ——'

'Ah yes, Manet painted a ham, did it justice, but that's cold fat. Look at this. He was never as fond of music halls as I was. There used to be in the Rue de la, what's its name behind the Gare de Montparnasse, ah, I've forgotten, it's a good one, red and gold, trumpets and lyres in plaster and what's his name, ah, you know, he painted it and we all agreed, there were several of us in the studio at the time, when he showed it to us, we all agreed it was the spit of it. I must write my reminiscences before I get too old, before I forget everything. They were very gay, those days.'

Mr. Sickert began to sing a French song at the same time piling food on to his fork. The words of his song were unintelligible. He stopped and plunged the fork into his mouth. Talking with his mouth full he cried: 'More hock for all, pass up the glasses there'.

Again they were filled.

'You know, you boys, I haven't the slightest idea who you are or where you come from. You might just as well come from the moon for all I care. One thing I do know, we're having a jolly good time.'

We each raised our glass and with flushed faces cried, 'To you, Mr. Sickert,' and drank down the hock in one gulp.

Our glasses were filled again and again and more bottles opened. I do not remember the sweet. I remember Mr. Sickert waving his spoon and singing more French songs. I remember Mrs. Sickert sitting there smiling, still sipping her wine and refusing a second glass.

After some excellent gorgonzola and a glass of port from a decanter on the sideboard, Mrs. Sickert rose from the table and led us to the drawing room for coffee.

We sat on chintz-covered sofas and looked through lace curtains into the garden, a square of ground bounded by brick walls. An apple tree overshadowed the beds.

On the left of the window was a conservatory jutting out from the house and stealing a patch of the garden.

I was thrilled. It reminded me vividly of the first day I was in Rome. I walked out of the hotel, not knowing where. I stared in wonder. In front of me was the Corot painting of a fountain. The same dark ilex trees overshadowing it and the view of Rome with the dome of St. Peter's beyond.

It was with the same thrill I looked out of the window on this Sunday and saw a painting by Sickert. 'Nature copies Art,' said Whistler.

'Now we will see Mrs. Sickert's paintings,' said Sickert.

I hope our faces did not show our disappointment, especially I would have hated to hurt Mrs. Sickert's feelings. We had hoped we would be shown the Sickert studio.

Instead we followed Mrs. Sickert down a winding flight of stairs to a room with french windows looking into the garden.

The room was quite bare except for an easel, a tidy palette, a neat bundle of brushes on a table, and a grey carpet.

A row of canvases were stacked with their faces to the wall.

'So this is where you paint, my dear,' he said, and looked round the room as tho' he had never been there before.

'Yes, this is where I do quite a number of my paintings,' she said diffidently.

'Well, let's see some,' said Sickert. 'What have you been doing lately? Bring them out.'

'Would you like to see them?' she asked us.

'Very much indeed,' we said.

'Well, I don't know I have many I would like to show. There are not many that are finished.'

She brought out a canvas from one of the stacks and stood it on the easel.

'The light's wrong, can't see it. That's better,' said Sickert, first shifting the canvas along the easel rack and then moving to the other side of the room where Mrs. Sickert was standing.

It was a circus scene.

'That's got it,' he said as he held her arm. 'The whip is cracking and there's plenty of drawing in that horse. You've got it my dear, what splendid light.'

He took her hand and gently squeezed it. She made a movement to fetch another canvas, but he held her there.

'Those rich reds of yours are splendid. You must paint more. Let's see some.'

He let go of her hand and she fetched several paintings of hop pickers.

'I did a lot of studies this year of the hop pickers. They make such a good subject. I hope to do a lot of them.'

She turned to her husband and said, 'We've seen enough of these. It's time you showed them some of yours.'

'I haven't got any, you know I haven't. A dealer was here last week and cleared the lot.'

'Well, show them what you have got,' she said relentlessly.

'All right, come on.' This time he led the way up the spiral staircase to a room of hopeless confusion.

Paint brushes and palettes were strewn on every table and chair. A pier glass reflected the litter of drawings, engravings, newspapers and the rest that made up the kaleidoscopic effect.

'Well, won't know what to show you,' Sickert stood in the middle of the studio, scratching his head—'ah, here's one'. He picked up a canvas off the floor. It lay under the cracked marble topped console table.

It was a picture of a girl trying on a hat and leaning against the end of an iron bedstead, painted in green.

'That's from a drawing I found the other day. I did it years ago before the war. About 1910 I expect, when I was living in Camden Town. Couldn't think what colour to paint it. Brown, no, done too many of 'em. Let's have a change. I know, I said, the colour of green blotting paper. Got to match it you know, so I rang up for a taxi, went down to a shop in Broadstairs. Careful, I say, don't catch your heels in the tramlines. Bought a piece of green blotting paper, must be green I said to the girl. Happy as a sandboy, came back and copied it carefully. Le voilà.'

A wireless had been turned on in a neighbouring house.

'That ghastly noise,' he said and ran to the window and drew the heavy curtains. 'That shuts out that infernal noise.'

The studio was quite dark. Someone opened the door to let some light in and Mrs. Sickert remonstrated with her husband. 'Really, we won't be able to see a thing.'

'Well, there's nothing more to show you, better that than noise out of a can.'

He opened the door still wider. 'We'll go back to the drawing room. I'll go and pull the curtains, better electric light than that din.'

Once more we were sitting on the sofa. 'Mr. Sickert,' I said, 'in your studio I noticed you had drawn over a number of photographs.'

'Ah yes, people think I paint from photographs. Yes, so I do when I've teased what I want out of them. I draw what I want on top of them. I take a piece of charcoal or a bit of colour and draw, putting in a few tones. There is my secret. I photograph that and work from the new photograph. Sometimes I have it made into a slide for my magic lantern and throw it on to the canvas and draw round. There's a good second-hand shop down the road that sells me engravings. I do the same with them. There's my secret, there you are, you go away with something.'

We suggested it was time that we left, but Sickert insisted we should see his bedroom.

He took us upstairs and opened a door on the landing.

'What a marvellous shape, what a curious shaped room,' he said with surprise and I wondered if this was his bedroom or another room on the way.

'This is where I sleep,' he said. 'See the prints. There's a first-class man, an artist for you.'

I have forgotten the name of the Edwardian wood engraver. His work was typical of the *Illustrated London News* of the period. 'Ah, I am lucky, beautiful prints, a curious shaped room, a wall cut off by the stairs makes it charmingly triangular. Wonderful things to look at.'

We returned to the drawing room, where he told Mrs. Sickert about the beauty of his oddly shaped room.

She listened intently and shared with him his enthusiasm.

'Mrs. Sickert, we must be leaving. We would like to thank you very much.'

'You will come again, I do hope so,' she said. 'We have enjoyed seeing you.'

We continued to talk in the hall as we put on our hats and coats.

'We will soon be leaving St. Peters. We're going to live in Bath. As soon as we are settled you must come and see us.'

We thanked them again and looked forward to the day in Bath.

Mr. and Mrs. Sickert stood in the doorway and waved to us as we opened the iron gate with the evergreen hedge. We were out in the street again.

Four happy, contented beings travelled back to Victoria, peacefully sleeping in their corner seats.

## SELECTED NOTICES

*The Spanish Labyrinth.* By Gerald Brenan. Cambridge University Press. 21s.

THE preface to Gerald Brenan's account of the 'social and political background of the Civil War', in the words of the sub-title, ends with the sentence:

'This book, which I began in order to distract my mind from the horrors and suspense of the Civil War, is simply one more proof of the deep and lasting impression which Spain makes on those who know her.'

For the last six years, I have felt frankly gratified as well as intrigued by the strength of the impression my country makes on the foreigners who come to know, or at least to meet her. This impression shows up on odd occasions which appear to have no connection with Spain, in the books of Dos Passos and Hemingway, in the editorial comments of Cyril Connolly, in the critical studies of V. S. Pritchett, in military articles by Tom Wintringham and in the poetry of that English generation whose members joined the International Brigades, or went out to report the Spanish War, or felt guilty because they had done neither. In particular, that war, small-scale dress-rehearsal though it now seems, has left a trace in the minds of non-Spaniards, which the greater material impact of this present war has never erased.

What is this quality of my country and people, which is so stimulating and provocative that it forces itself upon foreigners, making them explore us as we have never been able to explore ourselves? In justification of his seemingly untropical book, Brenan gives a tentative answer:

'... I believe that under all the folly and frenzy of Spanish politics a consistent attitude emerges. . . . One may describe it as a hatred of political shams, a craving for a richer and deeper social life, an acceptance of a low material standard of living and a belief that the ideal of human dignity and brotherhood can never be attained by political means alone, but must be sought in a moral reformation (compulsory, it is needless to say) of society. . . . But it is not totalitarian. . . . The long and bitter experience which Spaniards have had of the workings of bureaucracy has led them to stress the superiority of society to government, of custom to law, of the judgement of neighbours to legal



forms of justice and to insist on the need for an inner faith or ideology, since this alone will enable men to act as they should, in mutual harmony, without the need for compulsion.'

Within the limits of any simplifying generalization, I believe this to be a fair statement of the more or less vague, more or less conscious belief which lies behind the bitter soul-searchings and recriminations of Spanish exiles, behind the baffling explosions and even more baffling attacks of inertia of our politics. It goes together with that merciless sincerity and honesty which others recognize in the best of Spain and for which we Spaniards look in each other. We, however, have not yet found a creative social form for it, and go on searching through costly trial and error, while others, foreigners, are inspired by this Spanish attitude and dissect us, trying to discover the seat of our strength and our weaknesses, thus to shed new light on their own problems.

This is what Gerald Brenan has attempted to do, and partly achieved in his book. He has dissected the political and social life of Spain during the past seventy years, labelling each slide with the detached care of a scientist, and yet never losing his affection for the live Spain. It is an honest piece of historical analysis, well documented and focused. It is not, of course, free from subjective twists and misleading generalizations. But it is free from pretence and sham, and therefore far above any recent attempt at explaining the Spanish phenomenon, particularly by Spaniards with an illustrious name, an axe to grind and insufficient personal knowledge of fighting Spain.

Brenan has been accused of having written a Left-wing book. Imitating a favourite phrase of Antonio Machado, I confess that I am pleased not to know the author's political affiliations, if any. Certainly his analysis shows with great force that the Civil War followed inevitably from social and ideological conditions, that, in the events leading up to it, the forces of the Right, that is, the defunct Monarchy, Army, Church and the ruling caste, belied the ideals of 'human dignity and brotherhood', and that the hectic movements of the masses contained the strongest creative elements within the country. Yet Brenan appears that typically English thing, a progressive conservative (though not with capital C), who loves the working people and loves cultural traditions, who dislikes Marxism very much, but is scrupulously fair in trying—vainly—to overcome his bias, and who fundamentally is a mystic enamoured with the Spanish *mystique*.

To me, the greatest value of this book lies in the fact that a man like this, with an intimate knowledge of popular life in one of the Spanish regions, should set out to account for our contradictions and problems, promises and failures, and end by showing, through documented analysis, that a Right Spain must mean a protracted decay of everything our people might give to the world and achieve for themselves. Its greatest weakness is that, almost fearful of destroying the mystic quality of 'Spanishness', the book tends to speak of Spanish characteristics as though they were immutable, truly racial and not conditioned by historical and social factors.

Brenan divides his survey into three parts, the first dealing with the Monarchy from its restoration in 1874 until its finale in 1931, the second a study of the Spanish working classes, the third a survey of the Republic up to the outbreak of the Civil War. Throughout the whole book, he is

concerned with the interrelations of the ruling castes, the common people and the national-regional movements which split up, or grouped together, rulers and ruled.

Being deeply intrigued by the spiritual and moral code of Spaniards, Brenan intersperses comment and generalized judgement in his analytical account: 'Spaniards are a very envious race'. . . 'they are neither just nor fair, but honest'. . . 'abnormal sensitiveness to injustice'. . . 'by nature a suspicious and exclusive race'. . . 'patient and fatalistic'. . . 'liberty-loving and anarchic'. . . and so forth. Occasionally, he tries to explain these traits by referring to basic geographical conditions, or by tracing the pattern of Celt-Iberian behaviour back through history. Yet I think that he accepts these psychological observations, most of which are true in a limited form, in a too absolute and idealistic manner. This becomes important whenever he has to describe the rôle and character of Castile, the Spanish region he seems to know and understand least intimately. (It may be that I am particularly sensitive to it because I am myself a Castilian.) His equation Castile=Centralism=Marxism=Authoritarianism=negation of the economic interests of more fertile and industrialized regions, is based on several faulty premises. One of them is the assumption that the central bureaucracy of Madrid equals Castile. Another is the interpretation of Castilian Socialism as simply 'a branch of a European family whose leading characteristics are well-known everywhere', namely Marxism. All this goes with an exceptional comprehension of Catalonia and Andalusia, and their characteristic anarchist movements. It makes the author little receptive to the anarchic individualism of the Castilian labourer and, last but not least, it makes him—in his epilogue about the Civil War—miss the significance of the spontaneous mass defence of Madrid: *rompeolas de todas las Españas*, 'breakwater of all the Spains'.

Nevertheless, Brenan's generalizations and, to my mind, misinterpretations are in a good sense provocative. They show the need for research into problems which lie in the treacherous no-man's-land between history, sociology and psychology, and they do not detract from the value of his exposition of political trends.

It is very useful that the author starts his account with an analysis of Spanish politics in the second half of the last century, when Cánovas introduced the parliamentary regime which lingered on until Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. A simple account shows that the constitutional form was made almost valueless by the distribution of power between the Army, split into factions but united by a thirst for promotion, the Liberal and Conservative Parties, bound by a Pact which secured them their hold on the administration at the price of manipulated polls, and the Church, with its power over the Throne, the Army and the well-to-do. He describes the fatal growth of the political middle-men, the *Caciques*, and their services to a decaying aristocracy and a parasitic plutocracy, except for the few outlying regions where modern capitalism changed the conditions. Brenan recalls the England of the late eighteenth century, also governed by a parliament managed by the great landlords, with an impoverished middle-class, an industrial and mining movement in its infancy, and starvation wages: 'In England there was great political corruption and the Church, lost to all sense of its religious obligations, had

ceased to be anything more than a prop to the rich. Yet here the resemblance ends.' In England, this period marked the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, the unfolding of the energies of Capitalism with the first revolutionary impetus of its ideas. Spain passed 'through the same economic phase 150 years later'. The economic surge was lacking, but all the corruption and unrest was there. In that stagnant Spain all social forces were locked in the same 'fatal lethargy', in that 'disease which radiated from above downwards'. Inevitably, this picture of Spain before 1898 forced the author to record that much of the same corruption, the same political brutality, of Rotten Boroughs was rampant in the Spain he himself came to know from 1920 onwards. Indeed, many of the social formations which came into being in the last century still survived with all their odour of decay until the end of the Republic, when the Civil War smashed them on both sides.

The founder of the Constitutional Monarchy, the despairing Conservative Cánovas, hoped to cement the social foundations of the regime by allowing 'the Church, the Army and the politicians to get rich together'. But he only succeeded in demoralizing the upper and middle classes—there was no Puritan or Huguenot creed to mould what Brenan calls 'the bourgeois ideal of work, perseverance and duty'—and in separating them by 'an immense gulf from the rest of the country'.

Old and new forces were stirring in this stagnation of 'invertebrate' Spain. But each impulse remained isolated within one of the groups or layers of society, increasing antagonism and differences, until the whole country was bound in a rigid stratification. Only a cataclysm could upset it, but this cataclysm was due to come as a result of this very structure. Brenan believes that the Spanish nation only exists as such whenever all groups and individuals are united by a common powerful idea, when it is 'sometimes capable of producing great and striking effects'. He says: 'Spain, since the loss of its Catholic faith, has been . . . a country in search of an ideology.' (Be it noted that Brenan rightly recognizes that this loss of the Catholic faith is neither very recent, nor due to Republican, Masonic or Marxist agitation, but to the evolution of the Spanish Church itself.) Even if one does not accept his sweeping formula of Spain in search of an ideology, it must be admitted that it leads Brenan into a most fruitful examination of the growth of the various ideologies in stratified Spain, which 'by the very fact of their diversity, ended by producing a situation which was insoluble'.

To explain the ideological climate of Spanish military dictatorships, the author examines the Army, its conduct and its rôle in Spanish life. He describes the parasitic character of the huge officers' corps and its atmosphere of wanton corruption—the soil on which the *juntas militares* have been growing. This is a subject which interests me particularly and of which I have a store of personal experiences. I found Brenan's statements soberly correct down to the small details which seem so shocking to some British circles that the man who observed them appears to them guilty of Left-wing exaggeration. Here is an example: Brenan visited Xauen (in Spanish Morocco) in the year of the great massacres, in 1924: 'I found neither reserve trenches nor barbed wire and only one road, so narrow that two limbers could with difficulty pass on it and so badly constructed that the bridges collapsed whenever it rained.'

Now, it so happens that a few years earlier it fell to my lot to plan and lay the track for one section of this road. Brenan is right in his facts. The road was not meant to hold two guns at the same time—who would have reckoned with such a wealth of armament? And the bridges were built on a budget not sufficient for solid building, but sufficient to enrich the contractors and some of the military. Again, I could cap Brenan's statement: 'In Melilla, for example, the money for the roads, for barracks and for equipment disappeared into the pockets of the colonels and generals . . . others paid their gambling debts by selling rifles to the tribesmen . . .' by a number of tales complete with names and dates. But I have written about this elsewhere. All the same, I am glad that an English author has evoked these facts out of his own knowledge, for this story of the Spanish Army is very 'topical'.

Even more timely is perhaps Brenan's analysis of the Spanish Catholic Church, because in this point he has to contend with even more fond illusions on the part of the British public. Because in Britain Roman Catholicism has been a disestablished minority religion, for a long time robbed of the privileges enjoyed by other denominations, English Catholics, and particularly converts, seem almost incapable of realizing the particular brand of the Spanish Catholic Church. In this English climate the bigotry and totalitarian intolerance of the Spanish Church is as difficult to understand as the fact that religious hunger goes together with anti-clerical passion in so many Spaniards.

Brenan is very much alive to the past achievements of the Spanish Church, which make him regret the mercenary sequel. He stresses the leadership of the monks in the social conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—part of the struggle for power in the new State—and in the wars against Napoleon, although he does not go into the origin and consequences of the clerical influence during the 'War of Liberation'. I recommend, as an amplification of his bibliography for this chapter, a study of the partisan but illuminating *Letters from Spain* by Blanco White, and of Goya's *Desastres de la Guerra* and *Caprichos*. Brenan sketches the Church's change of position, which led to the loss of faith in its hierarchy among the great masses. Discarding the false thesis of the landed wealth of the Church, he records the documented, as well as the suspected, share of the Jesuits in industry and banking, the all-pervading social power and political intrigues of the high clergy, the misery of the rural priests, and the reactions of the people, of a religious people in search of a faith, which felt betrayed by those who administered to its religious needs. In 1835, the 'mob' of many Spanish towns cut the throats of monks and burnt churches. In 1936, history repeated itself. With great care, with impartial clarity, Brenan shows the causes of these outrages which are outbursts of disillusioned, deeply hurt masses. He says: 'The Church presented in Spain an insoluble problem, and when in the end the majority of the population abandoned it in despair at its political intransigence and burned churches and killed priests in revolutionary—I might almost say in true Catholic and filial—anger, there is surely nothing to be surprised at.' And, on another occasion, he reminds his compatriots: 'We forget, I think, our history when we show surprise at this anti-Papist violence. Between the decapitated saints in English churches and the broken altars and blackened walls in Spain there is only a difference of degree.'

I quote this, because it is truly important. There is a tendency abroad to make any anticlericalism sound like something akin to Nazi ideology, and any official ecclesiastic body like a representative of that cultural inheritance and future of a free spirit, for which we are fighting. And the Spanish example disproves both claims.

Brenan comes nearest to the heart of the matter in his admirable chapter on the Spanish agrarian question. This, of course, is the central problem of Spanish social history and politics, past, present and future. The author surveys each Spanish region separately, not in the form of general statements about landowners and land proletariat, as so many before him, but in exact appraisal of climate, irrigation, methods of cultivation, land tenure and its history. The divergencies of social structure and ideologies are explained and become explicable in this light. Regional movements like Catalan and Basque separatism, social movements like the variegated brands of Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism of Catalonia, Andalusia and Aragon have grown from their own soil.

It is the description of Andalusia, its economic conditions and its particular brand of Anarchism, which is fullest and most enlightening. But once more, there is a certain baldness in the treatment of Castile and its movements, particularly its socialism.

With all his severe criticism of Anarchist violence, Brenan describes its growth with deep understanding. He shows the Andalusian land slaves in their absolute dependence on the latifundia, their illiteracy, their misery, their desperate fights for the mere pittance of a wage increase, the utter contempt of the great landowners for production and producers, and he shows at the same time how Anarchism brings them a new, mystic creed. He gives a concise account of the history of Anarchism, which should be valuable for those who lump all working-class movements together as 'Marxism' or 'Bolshevism'—if only they would read a book like this!—and its Spanish forms. In this, he somewhat neglects the social composition of the big ports, Barcelona and Malaga, with their *lumpenproletariat* drawn from the poorest rural districts. He concentrates on those aspects of Anarchism—its religious fervour, its unworldliness, its evangel of brotherhood—which in his eyes make it so essentially Spanish.

He contrasts Anarchism with 'Castilian' socialism. And here, once more, his preconceived idea of Castile as a kind of hollow centre, but not heart, of Spain seems to obscure his analysis. He sees this centralist, dominating Castile as a whole, lumping together its ruling caste and its common people. It seems to me that he does not know Castile of the grey lands and the silent, bitterly poor labourers, or Madrid of the skilled workers and the host of white collar proletarians, but remembers mainly the huge, bloated machinery of the State which sits in Madrid, oppressing Catalonia and Andalusia and Castile alike.

Starting from this point, he comes very near to treating the Socialists, with their headquarters in Madrid, with the lack of differentiation others bring to bear upon the Anarchist movement. Thus he calls Pablo Iglesias a 'Marxist'—Pablo Iglesias, the founder of the labour movement, a humanitarian and idealist, who was a well-known member of the Second International and an anti-Anarchist, but no more a Marxist than any of the old British Trade Unionists! Under the impression of Anarchism, with its great rush of mysticism

and violence tempered by the brotherhood ideal, Brenan underrates the sober and lasting achievement of the U.G.T. and the Spanish socialists. This achievement was not theoretical; Marxism has not yet been transformed into a living and growing Spanish ideology, because so far it has remained a matter of book knowledge. Spanish Socialism, however, has been the leaven in the shapeless Republican movements, among the progressive intellectuals, among the clerical workers, to whom it brought the solid core of its skilled workers. It was the real danger to the powers-that-were, because it threatened their hold on the administration of the State; they thought they could handle and sometimes exploit the blind force of Anarchism, but they hated the educational and political development of Socialism.

Now, Socialism failed to become a great uniting force. Anarchism, in its turn, transformed an amorphous mass, refractory to any organization, into a movement; it has left its imprint on Spanish life, and much of it will live on, I think. Yet I do not believe that the qualities of 'municipal collectivism', of religious intensity, of anarchic hostility to the State are a monopoly of the Anarchists, as Brenan is inclined to assume. Below a different official doctrine, these 'Spanish' ideas—the product of three centuries of common delayed development and of many more centuries of social growth—are alive among Anarchists, Socialists, Communists and the countless Spaniards who belong to no party, but believe in a People's Spain.

Brenan shows in his third part how the Republic failed to solve its agrarian, economic, social and political problems, because each group followed its set ideology, in a single groove, and because the old powers were both cleverer and stronger than the new ones with their superior numbers. After his report on the working-class movements and the regional movements, he is able to describe the five years of the Republic as a drama whose actors we know only too well, whose tragic turn we anticipate. I found Brenan's record of the complicated interlocking moves of the various groups very useful and most objective, but less original than the rest of the book—inevitably so. His epilogue on the Civil War is, I think, the weakest part of all. It contains an interesting, but one-sided analysis of the rôle of the Communist Party, mainly based on Borkenau's *Spanish Cockpit* which practically ignores Madrid and all it stood for, and a brief, damning balance sheet of Franco's regime, which is almost superfluous. The preceding 315 pages have made out their case far more strongly.

I hope I have shown that I do not hail this book because it is 'Left' or because its conclusions coincide with mine—they often don't. Yet I have found this the best analytical book written on the pre-history of the Civil War, among the considerable literature I have read. Its very blemishes are stimulating. It succeeds in disentangling the roots of the conflict with such a gentle, comprehending ruthlessness, and with such confidence in the undying strength of the Spanish people, that I would like to translate it into Spanish, for there is much it can teach us. And I would like it to take pride of place in the hands of English readers who want to explore the Spanish maze, so as to understand an intrinsic part of their own world.

ARTURO BAREA



## GANDHI IN MAYFAIR

*Beggar my Neighbour.* By Lionel Fielden. Secker and Warburg, 3s. 6d.

If you compare commercial advertising with political propaganda, one thing that strikes you is its relative intellectual honesty. The advertiser at least knows what he is aiming at—that is, money—whereas the propagandist, when he is not a lifeless hack, is often a neurotic working off some private grudge and actually desirous of the exact opposite of the thing he advocates. The ostensible purpose of Mr. Fielden's book is to further the cause of Indian independence. It will not have that effect, and I do not see much reason for thinking that he himself wishes for anything of the kind. For if someone is genuinely working for Indian independence, what is he likely to do? Obviously he will start by deciding what forces are potentially on his side, and then, as cold-bloodedly as any toothpaste advertiser, he will think out the best method of appealing to them. This is not Mr. Fielden's manner of approach. A number of motives are discernible in his book, but the immediately obvious one is a desire to work off various quarrels with the Indian Government, All-India Radio and various sections of the British Press. He does indeed marshal a number of facts about India, and towards the end he even produces a couple of pages of constructive suggestions, but for the most part his book is simply a nagging, irrelevant attack on British rule, mixed up with tourist-like gush about the superiority of Indian civilization. On the fly-leaf, just to induce that matey atmosphere which all propagandists aim at, he signs his dedicatory letter 'among the European barbarians', and then a few pages later introduces an imaginary Indian who denounces Western civilization with all the shrillness of a spinster of thirty-nine denouncing the male sex;

'. . . an Indian who is intensely proud of his own traditions, and regards Europeans as barbarians who are continually fighting, who use force to dominate other peaceful peoples, who think chiefly in terms of big business, whisky, and bridge; as people of comparatively recent growth, who, while they put an exaggerated value on plumbing, have managed to spread tuberculosis and venereal disease all over the world . . . he will say that to sit in the water in which you have washed, instead of bathing yourself in running water, is not clean, but dirty and disgusting; he will show, and I shall agree with him absolutely, that the English are a dirty and even a smelly nation compared with the Indians; he will assert, and I am not at all sure that he is wrong, that the use of half-washed forks, spoons and knives by different people for food is revoltingly barbaric when compared with the exquisite manipulation of food by Indian fingers; he will be confident that the Indian room, with its bare walls and beautiful carpets, is infinitely superior to the European clutter of uncomfortable chairs and tables', etc. etc. etc.

The whole book is written in this vein, more or less. The same nagging, hysterical note crops up every few pages, and where a comparison can be dragged in it is dragged in, the upshot always being that the East is Good and the West is Bad. Now before stopping to inquire what service this kind of thing really does to the cause of Indian freedom, it is worth trying an experiment. Let me rewrite this passage as it might be uttered by an Englishman



speaking up for his own civilization as shrilly as Mr. Fielden's Indian. It is important to notice that what he says is not more dishonest or more irrelevant than what I have quoted above:

'... an Englishman who is intensely proud of his own traditions, and regards Indians as an unmanly race who gesticulate like monkeys, are cruel to women and talk incessantly about money; as a people who take it upon them to despise Western science and consequently are rotten with malaria and hookworm ... he will say that in a hot climate washing in running water has its points, but that in cold climates all Orientals either wash as we do or as in the case of many Indian hill tribes—not at all; he will show, and I shall agree with him absolutely, that no Western European can walk through an Indian village without wishing that his smell organs had been removed beforehand; he will assert, and I am not at all sure that he is wrong, that eating with your fingers is a barbarous habit since it cannot be done without making disgusting noises; he will be confident that the English room, with its comfortable armchairs and friendly bookshelves, is infinitely superior to the bare Indian interior where the mere effort of sitting with no support to your back makes for vacuity of mind', etc. etc. etc.

Two points emerge here. To begin with, no English person would now write like that. No doubt many people think such thoughts, and even utter them behind closed doors, but to find anything of the kind in print you would have to go back ten years or so. Secondly, it is worth asking, what would be the effect of this passage on an Indian who happened to take it seriously? He would be offended, and very rightly. Well then, isn't it just possible that passages like the one I quoted from Mr. Fielden might have the same effect on a British reader? No one likes hearing his own habits and customs abused. This is not a trivial consideration, because at this moment books about India have, or could have, a special importance. There is no political solution in sight, the Indians cannot win their freedom and the British Government will not give it, and all one can for the moment do is to push public opinion in this country and America in the right direction. But that will not be done by any propaganda that is merely anti-European. A year ago, soon after the Cripps mission had failed, I saw a well-known Indian nationalist address a small meeting at which he was to explain why the Cripps offer had been refused. It was a valuable opportunity, because there were present a number of American newspaper correspondents who, if handled tactfully, might cable to America a sympathetic account of the Congress Party's case. They had come there with fairly open minds. Within about ten minutes the Indian had converted all of them into ardent supporters of the British Government, because instead of sticking to his subject he launched into an anti-British tirade quite obviously founded on spite and inferiority complex. That is just the mistake that a toothpaste advertiser would not make. But then the toothpaste advertiser is trying to sell toothpaste and not to get his own back on that Blimp who turned him out of a first-class carriage fifteen years ago.

However, Mr. Fielden's book raises wider issues than the immediate political problem. He upholds the East against the West on the ground that the East is religious, artistic and indifferent to 'progress', while the West is materialistic, scientific, vulgar and warlike. The great crime of Britain is to have

forced industrialization on India. (Actually, the real crime of Britain during the last thirty years has been to do the opposite.) The West looks on work as an end in itself, but at the same time is obsessed with a 'high standard of living' (it is worth noticing that Mr. Fielden is anti-Socialist, Russophobe and somewhat contemptuous of the English working class), while India wants only to live in ancestral simplicity in a world freed from the machine. India must be independent, and at the same time must be de-industrialized. It is also suggested a number of times, though not in very clear terms, that India ought to be neutral in the present war. Needless to say, Mr. Fielden's hero is Gandhi, about whose financial background he says nothing. 'I have a notion that the legend of Gandhi may yet be a flaming inspiration to the millions of the East, and perhaps to those of the West. But it is, for the time being, the East which provides the fruitful soil, because the East has not yet fallen prone before the Golden Calf. And it may be for the East, once again, to show mankind that human happiness does not depend on that particular form of worship, and that the conquest of materialism is also the conquest of war.' Gandhi makes many appearances in the book, playing rather the same part as 'Frank' in the literature of the Buchmanites.

Now, I do not know whether or not Gandhi will be a 'flaming inspiration' in years to come. When one thinks of the creatures who *are* venerated by humanity it does not seem particularly unlikely. But the statement that India 'ought' to be independent, *and* de-industrialized, *and* neutral in the present war, is an absurdity. If one forgets the details of the political struggle and looks at the strategic realities, one sees two facts which are in seeming conflict. The first is that whatever the 'ought' of the question may be, India is very unlikely ever to be independent in the sense in which Britain or Germany is now independent. The second is that India's *desire* for independence is a reality and cannot be talked out of existence.

In a world in which national sovereignty exists, India cannot be a sovereign State, because she is unable to defend herself. And the more she is the cow and spinning-wheel paradise imagined by Mr. Fielden, the more this is true. What is now called independence means the power to manufacture aeroplanes in large numbers. Already there are only five genuinely independent States in the world, and if present trends continue there will in the end be only three. On a long-term view it is clear that India has little chance in a world of power politics, while on a short-term view it is clear that the necessary first step towards Indian freedom is an Allied victory. Even that would only be a short and uncertain step, but the alternatives must lead to India's continued subjection. If we are defeated, Japan or Germany takes over India and that is the end of the story. If there is a compromise peace (Mr. Fielden seems to hint at times that this is desirable, India's chances are no better, because in such circumstances we should inevitably cling to any territories we had captured or not lost. A compromise peace is always a peace of 'grab what you can'. Mr. Fielden brings forward his imaginary Indian to suggest that if India were neutral Japan might leave her alone; I doubt whether any responsible Indian nationalist has said anything quite so stupid as that. The other idea, more popular in Left-wing circles, that India could defend herself better on her own than with our help, is a sentimentality. If the Indians were militarily

superior to ourselves they would have driven us out long ago. The much-quoted example of China is very misleading here. India is a far easier country to conquer than China, if only because of its better communications, and in any case Chinese resistance depends on help from the highly-industrialized states and would collapse without it. One must conclude that for the next few years India's destiny is linked with that of Britain and the U.S.A. It might be different if the Russians could get their hands free in the West or if China were a great military power; but that again implies a complete defeat of the Axis, and points away from the neutrality which Mr. Fielden seems to think desirable. The idea put forward by Gandhi himself, that if the Japanese came they could be dealt with by sabotage and 'non-co-operation', is a delusion, nor does Gandhi show any very strong signs of believing in it. Those methods have never seriously embarrassed the British and would make no impression on the Japanese. After all, where is the Korean Gandhi?

But against this is the *fact* of Indian nationalism, which is not to be exorcised by the humbug of White Papers or by a few phrases out of Marx. And it is nationalism of an emotional, romantic, even chauvinistic kind. Phrases like 'the sacred soil of the Motherland', which now seem merely ludicrous in Britain, come naturally enough to an Indian intellectual. When the Japanese appeared to be on the point of invading India, Nehru actually used the phrase 'Who dies if India live?' So the wheel comes full circle and the Indian rebel quotes Kipling. And nationalism at this level works indirectly in favour of Fascism. Extremely few Indians are at all attracted by the idea of a federated world, the only kind of world in which India could actually be free. Even those who pay lip-service to federalism usually want only an Eastern federation, thought of as a military alliance against the West. The idea of the class struggle has little appeal anywhere in Asia, nor do Russia and China evoke much loyalty in India. As for the Nazi domination of Europe, only a handful of Indians are able to see that it affects their own destiny in any way. In some of the smaller Asiatic countries the 'my country right or wrong' nationalists were exactly the ones who went over to the Japanese—a step which may not have been wholly due to ignorance.

But here there arises a point which Mr. Fielden hardly touches on, and that is: we don't know to what extent Asiatic nationalism is simply the product of our own oppression. For a century all the major Oriental nations except Japan have been more or less in subjection, and the hysteria and shortsightedness of the various nationalist movements may be the result simply of that. To realize that national sovereignty is the enemy of national freedom may be a great deal easier when you are not being ruled by foreigners. It is not certain that this is so, since the most nationalist of the Oriental nations, Japan, is also the one that has never been conquered, but at least one can say that if the solution is not along these lines, then there is no solution. Either power politics must yield to common decency, or the world must go spiralling down into a nightmare of which we can already catch some dim glimpses. And the necessary first step, before we can make our talk about world federation sound even credible, is that Britain shall get off India's back. This is the only large-scale decent action that is possible in the world at this moment. The immediate preliminaries would be: abolish the Viceroyalty and the India Office, release

the Congress prisoners, and declare India formally independent. The rest is detail.<sup>1</sup>

But how are we to bring any such thing about? If it is done at this time, it can only be a voluntary act. Indian independence has no asset except public opinion in Britain and America, which is only a potential asset. Japan, Germany and the British Government are all on the other side, and India's possible friends, China and the U.S.S.R., are fighting for their lives and have little bargaining power. There remain the peoples of Britain and America, who are in a position to put pressure on their own Governments if they see a reason for doing so. At the time of the Cripps mission, for instance, it would have been quite easy for public opinion in this country to force the Government into making a proper offer, and similar opportunities may recur. Mr. Fielden, by the way, does his best to throw doubt on Cripps' personal honesty, and also lets it appear that the Congress Working Committee were unanimously against accepting the Cripps proposals, which was not the case. In fact, Cripps extorted the best terms he could get from the Government; to get better ones he would have had to have public opinion actively and intelligently behind him. Therefore the first job is—win over the ordinary people of this country. Make them see that India matters, and that India has been shamefully treated and deserves restitution. But you are not going to do that by insulting them. Indians, on the whole, grasp this better than their English apologists. After all, what is the probable effect of a book which irrelevantly abuses every English institution, rapturises over the 'wisdom of the East' like an American schoolmarm on a conducted tour, and mixes up pleas for Indian freedom with pleas for surrender to Hitler? At best it can only convert the converted, and it may de-convert a few of those. The net effect must be to strengthen British imperialism, though its motives are probably more complex than this may seem to imply.

On the surface, Mr. Fielden's book is primarily a plea for 'spirituality' as against 'materialism'. On the one hand an uncritical reverence for everything Oriental; on the other a hatred of the West generally, and of Britain in particular, hatred of science and the machine, suspicion of Russia, contempt for the working-class conception of Socialism. The whole adds up to Parlour Anarchism—a plea for the simple life, based on dividends. Rejection of the machine is, of course, always founded on tacit acceptance of the machine, a fact symbolised by Gandhi as he plays with his spinning-wheel in the mansion of some cotton millionaire. But Gandhi also comes into the picture in another way. It is noticeable that both Gandhi and Mr. Fielden have an exceedingly equivocal attitude towards the present war. Although variously credited in this country with being a 'pure' pacifist and a Japanese agent, Gandhi has, in fact, made so many conflicting pronouncements on the war that it is difficult to keep track of them. At one moment his 'moral support' is with the Allies, at another it is withdrawn, at one moment he thinks it best to come to terms with the Japanese, at another he wishes to oppose them by non-violent means—at the cost, he thinks, of several million lives—at another

<sup>1</sup> Of course the necessary corollary would be a military alliance for the duration of the war. But it is not likely that there would be any difficulty in securing this. Extremely few Indians really want to be ruled by Japan or Germany.

he urges Britain to give battle in the west and leave India to be invaded, at another he 'has no wish to harm the Allied cause' and declares that he does not want the Allied troops to leave India. Mr. Fielden's views on the war are less complicated, but equally ambiguous. In no place does he state whether or not he wishes the Axis to be defeated. Over and over again he urges that an Allied victory can lead to no possible good result, but at the same time he disclaims 'defeatism' and even argues that Indian neutrality would be useful to us in a *military* sense, i.e. that we could fight better if India were not a liability. Now, if this means anything, it means that he wants a compromise, a negotiated peace; and though he fails to say so, I do not doubt that that is what he does want. But curiously enough, this is the *imperialist* solution. The appeasers have always wanted neither defeat nor victory but a compromise with the other imperialist powers; and they too have known how to use the manifest folly of war as an argument.

For years past the more intelligent imperialists have been in favour of compromising with the Fascists, even if they had to give away a good deal in order to do so, because they have seen that only thus could imperialism be salvaged. Some of them are not afraid to hint this fairly broadly even now. If we carry the war to a destructive conclusion, the British Empire will either be lost, or democratised, or pawned to America. On the other hand it could and probably would survive in something like its present form if there were other sated imperialist powers which had an interest in preserving the existing world system. If we came to an understanding with Germany and Japan we might diminish our possessions (even that isn't certain: it is a little-noticed fact that *in territory* Britain and the U.S.A. have gained more than they have lost in this war), but we should<sup>at</sup> least be confirmed in what we had already. The world would be split up between three or four great imperial powers who, for the time being, would have no motive for quarrelling. Germany would be there to neutralize Russia, Japan would be there to prevent the development of China. Given such a world system, India could be kept in subjection almost indefinitely. And more than this, it is doubtful whether a compromise peace *could* follow any other lines. So it would seem that Parlour Anarchism is something very innocuous after all. Objectively it only demands what the worst of the appeasers want, subjectively it is of a kind to irritate the possible friends of India in this country. And does not this bear a sort of resemblance to the career of Gandhi, who has alienated the British public by his extremism and aided the British Government by his moderation? Impossibilism and reaction are usually in alliance, though not, of course, conscious alliance.

Hypocrisy is a very rare thing, true villainy is perhaps difficult as virtue. We live in a lunatic world in which opposites are constantly changing into one another, in which pacifists find themselves worshipping Hitler, Socialists become nationalists, patriots become quislings, Buddhists pray for the success of the Japanese army, and the Stock Market takes an upward turn when the Russians stage an offensive. But though these people's motives are often obvious enough when seen from the outside, they are not obvious to themselves. The scenes imagined by Marxists, in which wicked rich men sit in little secret rooms and hatch schemes for robbing the workers, don't happen in real life. The robbery takes place, but it is committed by sleepwalkers. Now, one

of the finest weapons that the rich have ever evolved for use against the poor is 'spirituality'. If you can induce the working-man to believe that his desire for a decent standard of living is 'materialism', you have got him where you want him. Also, if you can induce the Indian to remain 'spiritual' instead of taking up with vulgar things like trade unions, you can ensure that he will always remain a coolie. Mr. Fielden is indignant with the 'materialism' of the Western working class, whom he accuses of being even worse in this respect than the rich and of wanting not only radios but even motor-cars and fur coats. The obvious answer is that these sentiments don't come well from someone who is in a comfortable and privileged position himself. But that is only an answer, not a diagnosis, for the problem of the disaffected intelligentsia would be hardly a problem at all if ordinary dishonesty were involved.

In the last twenty years Western civilization has given the intellectual security without responsibility, and in England, in particular, it has educated him in scepticism while anchoring him almost immovably in the privileged class. He has been in the position of a young man living on an allowance from a father whom he hates. The result is a deep feeling of guilt and resentment, not combined with any genuine desire to escape. But some psychological escape, some form of self-justification there must be, and one of the most satisfactory is transferred nationalism. During the nineteen-thirties the normal transference was to Soviet Russia, but there are other alternatives, and it is noticeable that pacifism and Anarchism, rather than Stalinism, are now gaining ground among the young. These creeds have the advantage that they aim at the impossible and therefore in effect demand very little. If you throw in a touch of Oriental mysticism and Buchmanite raptures over Gandhi, you have everything that a disaffected intellectual needs. The life of an English gentleman and the moral attitudes of a saint can be enjoyed simultaneously. By merely transferring your allegiance from England to India (it used to be Russia), you can indulge to the full in all the chauvinistic sentiments which would be totally impossible if you recognized them for what they were. In the name of pacifism you can compromise with Hitler, and in the name of 'spirituality' you can keep your money. It is no accident that those who wish for an inconclusive ending to the war tend to extol the East as against the West. The actual facts don't matter very much. The fact that the Eastern nations have shown themselves at least as warlike and bloodthirsty as the Western ones, that so far from rejecting industrialism, the East is adopting it as swiftly as it can—this is irrelevant, since what is wanted is the mythos of the peaceful, religious and patriarchal East to set against the greedy and materialistic West. As soon as you have 'rejected' industrialism, and hence Socialism, you are in that strange no man's land where the Fascist and the pacifist join forces. There is indeed a sort of apocalyptic truth in the statement of the German radio that the teachings of Hitler and Gandhi are the same. One realizes this when one sees Middleton Murry praising the Japanese invasion of China and Gerald Heard proposing to institute the Hindu caste system in Europe at the same time as the Hindus themselves are abandoning it. We shall be hearing a lot about the superiority of Eastern civilization in the next few years. Meanwhile this is a mischievous book, which will be acclaimed in the Left-wing Press and welcomed for quite different reasons by the more intelligent Right.

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